

GRADUATE
UNEMPLOYMENT

DISCUSSION NOTES FOR WEEKEND SCHOOL ON STUDENTS,
OCTOBER 28 & 29 th, 1972

PRODUCED BY THE STUDENT NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE,
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GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT

The last few years have faced students like the rest of the working class with a growing threat of unemployment. Just as a degree has ceased to be a passport out of the class struggle, so it can no longer even guarantee a job. Far from being privileged, students cannot even count on the privilege of wage-slavery.

More and more students are denied the right to work, but as yet there has been more solidarity with others fighting unemployment than struggle on their own behalf. Despite all the 'concern' that has almost made graduate unemployment a cliché, the mass of students have not grasped how quickly growing is the section of their number whose training leads only to supplementary benefit (most are not even eligible for the dole). If they had, then surely we would have witnessed some reaction more than the complacencies issued by the NUS executive.

Unemployment is a demoralising experience; for students, who are not sure what job they are looking for, who having no job, have no trade union, who are isolated and helpless in the extreme once they leave college, it is no 'bohemian' idyll. The "political" theories advanced to justify, to praise unemployment among graduates (even to argue that students should not graduate) have played a pernicious role in countering potential struggle. These 'theories' range from saying that not working for capitalism is progressive and will weaken the system, to the idea that the "middle-class" student has no right to demand a "better" job than the working class — he must become a bus-conductor as a step towards an egalitarian society !

Only our Party has the understanding to combat these ideas. It must explain that, like the rest of the working class, students must fight for the right to work with the skills they possess. We must point to the developing situation we are in and assist in finding ways to fight it; graduate unemployment must become one more arena for the fight to smash capitalism.

THE GROWTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG GRADUATES

At the moment government (U.G.C.) statistics exist only for the growth of graduate unemployment, and these do not cover non-university graduates. There is no reason to believe that students from other areas of higher and further education find it easier to get jobs than university graduates. For instance a 1970 survey of arts students leaving college in 1968 gave a figure of 6% unemployed and 14% in jobs unrelated to art and design -- everyone wanted jobs related to their education. (J.Ritchie : The Employment of Art College leavers). Since the survey's response rate was 63%, the real figures are probably worse; as it is, a figure of 6% unemployed is much higher than that for university graduates of the same year.

The UGC gets its figures from each University Appointments service. Suffice to say that no University wants a reputation for bad employment prospects and the government itself has clearly demonstrated its desire to minimize the situation

through the manipulation of unemployment categories for 1971 that allowed Heath to lie that the number 'seeking employment' had declined. The UGC figures almost certainly err on the conservative side, but the trends are clear.

TABLE 1. Unemployment among University Graduates.

Year	Total Graduates	Unemployed at end of year	Unknown
1965-66	32,166	2.3%	4.7%
1966-67	36,528	3.4%	5.5%
1967-68	42,615	3.9%	6.0%
1968-69	45,003	4.2%	7.7%
1969-70	47,584	5.4%	8.5%
1970-71	50,555	7.7% *	10.0% **

Source: UGC "The first employment of University Graduates", and W.P.Kirkman, Chairman of Standing Conference of University Appointments Services.

*In 1971 UGC changed its employment categories: those "seeking employment" were divided into 'unemployed' and 'in temporary employment'. Thus 7.7%, the figure roughly comparable to previous years, is now made up of 4.7% unemployed and 3% temporarily employed. These figures were released in July 1972 (T.H.E.S. No.39).

**This figure is an estimate based on Kirkman's disclosure of 4,912 'unknown', at the end of 1971 (THES 29, April 1972). Although the UGC's figures are based on information from the University Appointments Boards, there are frequent discrepancies; the UGC's estimate of unknowns is not yet available for 1971.

Firstly the unemployment rate has been growing steadily at least since 1965 as has the percentage of those whose destination is unknown. An estimate produced by the THES in October 1971 suggested that by December of that year unemployment would have roughly doubled since 1970. Not surprisingly, the UGC's own figure of 7.7% is smaller than this, although still above the national average. The point is sometimes made that things are not so bad as the absolute number of graduates has increased; this ignores the fact that it is the 'percentage' rate of unemployment that is increasing, a 'percentage' rate which masks the even steeper climb of absolute numbers of unemployed. The government is also fond of saying that not all the 'unknowns' can be assumed to be unemployed, but the fact that the appointments services have lost contact with more and more students at a time of growing employment difficulties can only suggest that more and more students have found that the appointments service cannot find them a job.

At one time the government used the worse unemployment of arts and social science students as a weapon to divide students and malign the 'rebellious' social scientists : they were wasting the taxpayers' money by doing 'airy-fairy' subjects that no employer had any use for, as if students chose social science so they would not have to go to work !

Table 3 shows that pure and applied scientists are rapidly catching up, as industry decides that even science and technology are luxuries it can do without. The greatest percentage rise in graduate unemployment between 1964 and 1970 was amongst male pure scientists and applied scientists are on the way to being the

to being the fastest risers between 1970 and 1971. The dramatic switch to teacher-training in the last year illustrates not only how unemployment is threatening all students, but its real magnitude.

TABLE 2. Graduate unemployment by University * (On 31 December for graduates of the year 1971)

Oxford	1.1%	Birmingham	4.3%	Bradford	6.4%
Glasgow	1.1%	Cambridge	4.6%	UMIST	6.6%
Durham	1.5%	Edinburgh	4.6%	UWIST	6.4%
City	1.9%	Aberdeen	4.7%	Stirling	6.5%
Strathclyde	2%	Warwick	4.8%	Heriot-Watt	6.5%
Bristol	2.4%	Kent	4.9%	Dundee	6.1%
Aston	2.6%	Salford	4.9%	Leicester	7.6%
Aberystwyth	2.9%	Hull	5.1%	Newcastle	7.3%
Swansea	3 %	Brunel	5.4%	Sheffield	7.2%
Reading	3.2%	Exeter	5.4%	St.Davids	7.1%
Liverpool	3.5%	Leeds	5.4%	Keele	8 %
St.Andrews	3.6%	Manchester	5.5%	Southampton	8 %
Bath	3.7%	Nottingham	5.5%	East Anglia	9.9%
London	3.8%	Surrey	5.6%	Essex	11.6%
Cardiff	4 %	York	5.9%	Sussex	10.2%
Bangor	4.1%	Loughboro'	6.1%	Lancaster	13.8%

Source: Under-Secretary of State, Dept. of Employment, Dudley Smith.

* These figures almost certainly give a very conservative view of graduate unemployment, since as far as one can tell they are figures for the new category of 'unemployed' ie excluding those who have been forced to take temporary jobs while still in fact looking for permanent employment. For example the figures for London, Leeds, Strathclyde and Cambridge are given as 3.8, 5.4, 2, and 4.6 respectively; yet the figures for those seeking employment given by the Appointments Services of these Universities themselves are 8.3, 8, 3, and 9% respectively. The advantage of this new system of classification for the government was perfectly expressed by the fact that Heath was recently able to claim a 'decline' in graduate unemployment (THES, June 2nd 1972).

A very approximate estimate for the percentage of students in each particular university still seeking employment can be gained by multiplying the individual figure above by a factor of 5/3.

Likewise, doubling the above figures will give an approximation of the percentage of students whose employment situation is 'unknown'.

TABLE 3. Graduate Unemployment by Subject.

(A) For 1969-70:	Arts Based	6.2%	(Unknown 10%)	
	Science Based	4.5%	(Unknown 6.6%)	
(B)	1965-66	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
Pure Science	1.8%	3.9%	5.6%	Unknown
Social Science		5.7%	6.3%	"
Arts		4.2%	6.0%	"
Applied Science		2.1%	2.9%	6.7%

(C) Proportion of graduates in Engineering and Technology entering home employment who entered industry and commerce.

1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
51.7%	48.2%	45.0%	39.2%

TABLE 4. MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL TRENDS.

Apart from research or further academic training, the two main destinations of first degree graduates in 1969-70 were teacher training and industry. These two areas are also those which did distinguish between arts and science students most sharply.

<u>1969-70</u>	<u>Total%</u>	<u>Arts Based</u>	<u>Science Based</u>
Teacher Training	15.3%	20.7%	9.4%
Industry	18.8%	7%	31.7%

1970-71 precise figures not available

Estimates indicate: Teacher training 32%. Industry 13%

1. 25-30% decline in jobs available in manufacturing industry from last year (Durham & Newcastle Appointments Boards)
Many universities have reported proportionate decline in number of science graduates entering industry.
2. Nearly 1 in three 1971 graduates applied for teacher training.
eg. the number of applications for one year postgraduate courses in University departments and colleges of education rose by, from 1970, nearly 30%. In secondary school teaching the biggest rises were in science subjects.

The U.G.C. reports a slightly better unemployment picture for women graduates; even apart from the initial discrepancy in numbers of women and men graduates, this masks the almost certainly heavier pressure on women to take non-graduate status jobs; a man would not think of doing a secretarial course after university to get a job, but the practice is increasing among women graduates.

Already many students are being forced to take any job they can get that is at all commensurate with their education, while the ruling class is clear that it does not regard those forced into lower paid jobs while still looking for work as an unemployment problem, for this is part of its strategy for shifting the blame for unemployment from capitalism on to the graduates themselves.

The Ruling Class Lie.

Several bourgeois spokesmen have said that graduate unemployment is not a temporary aberration. The Guest, Keene and Nettlefold's graduate training

manager said in Jan '72: "there is no longer any shortage of graduates, only a shortage of jobs that graduates expect. . .The change in the level of 'graduate-expectation' jobs is permanent; it is not just a temporary recession, it is a permanent result of expansion. . .' The C.B.I. (Jan'72) has predicted that 'the number of jobs that industry considers appropriate for graduates will not increase as fast as the supply of graduates in the next 10 years' going on to say that 'the present reduced level of demand for graduate manpower is not entirely due to the current state of the economy'. In other words, graduate unemployment is here to stay and will probably get worse in the foreseeable future. Rather than blame a stagnant capitalist economy, both spokesmen find the cause of graduate unemployment in the fact that there are too many graduates (a true pearl of wisdom !)

Higher education was expanded for the benefit of the capitalist class because it needed better educated workers: witness 32166 graduates in 1966, 50555 in 1971, most of whom found 'graduate-expectation' jobs. If higher education had been expanded without reference to the manpower needs of the capitalists, then nearly half of 1971 graduates should now be without a job if taking even the 1966 graduate output as a criterion of capitalist need. Capitalism expanded education to meet its manpower requirements but found that it could not plan for those any better than it would plan its economy. Capitalism still wants better educated workers, higher education is still being expanded, but on the one hand this means a bigger pool of unemployed given the impossibility of planning and on the other capitalism intends to cut the quality of their work and also pay them less.

The Universities contribute to the lie that education is charity, to be valued for its own sake in the receipt as in the giving, that to dare to complain when no job comes at the end of it is sheer ingratitude. The industrialists and appointments boards spell out the lie's consequences, that students must take jobs below the normal graduate level: "If an increased graduate output is to be absorbed, this will mean an inevitable broadening of the range of employment for many graduates and an increased acceptance of jobs below the traditional level" (C.B.I.)

Unemployment it seems, is the fault of graduates for having been granted education, and expecting to make use of that education in employment - apparantly they should sit out the rest of their life in serene quietude, reflecting contentedly on their brief taste of paradise. The advice of the ruling class is to forget your training and compete with the rest of the unemployed for any job that's going. But it is obvious that there would still be too few jobs even if some of those who need them hadn't been educated; for students to 'adjust' their expectations can only solve graduate unemployment at the price of increasing it for non-graduates. Our demand is not just the right to work in general, but the right to the

work for which we have been trained (it is for the graduate to determine what degree of relevance makes a job acceptable) - any weakness on this point because of some misplaced 'egalitarianism' can only serve the bourgeoisie in its attempt to divide the unemployed, setting one section against another.

Existing Illusions among Students.

For the most part N.U.S. policy on graduate unemployment echoes the solutions of the ruling class. The one good point in the November 1971 motion on 'Unemployment and Government Economic Policy', that accepting non-graduate jobs was no solution as it merely "exacerbated tension", is contradicted by the April '72 Executive report "On Youth and Graduate Unemployment and Allied Problems". From our experience the 'solutions' in this report give a good picture of the illusions among students that must be combatted to win them to a policy of struggle for the right to work. That education is not a training, it is to be valued for its own sake, but conversely that capitalist manpower planning can be improved through tinkering with careers and counselling services to perfect the match between education and industry; that curriculum reform will provide graduates that capitalism wants - some will say that courses are too general, others that they are too narrow; that graduates are to blame for having "unreasonable salary expectations", "insisting on employment directly related to their degree subject", for not being willing to travel.

It has to be explained that education already exists to serve the needs of capitalism, it is education for exploitation, that unemployment is a matter of capitalist crisis not suddenly irrelevant courses, that improved counselling can only speed the journey to what might or might not be a job, that the graduate who will go anywhere to do anything for what ever little he can get is only the 'ideal' worker that capitalists have always sought to find through the threat of unemployment - that even if you wanted to beg (which most don't) it won't create jobs.

When students in the mass see that they must fight unemployment, that they must struggle to preserve and create jobs, the Party will already have performed a large task of ideological development for students as students are not yet employed or unemployed and it will take much clarity on their part. To start with and to build on there are those with work experience, those who are at or have come back to University (particularly postgraduates) because of job difficulties.

How can students fight unemployment ?

To quote the Party's Unemployment pamphlet:

"Of course capitalism produces unemployment. Of course the only answer to unemployment is employment. Of course security and full employment are not possible under capitalism. Of course the answer is destroy capitalism and build socialism. Of course this is only possible with revolution, and the fight for the right to work is a necessary stage - part of education toward that end.

In interim we must not run away, make 'left' noises, call for ultimate actions without joining in this the contemporary battle'.

It's not enough to tell students that the solution is to smash capitalism, they insist on knowing how. We have no experience of our own yet in fighting unemployment. We have to use the experience of the rest of the working class and translate it into forms of struggle appropriate to where we are, we are not unemployed graduates and must fight as students. Not to find our equivalent of occupations and strikes for we are developing those already, we know in what ways students can fight when they are clear, but what are our redundancies and closures around which to launch the struggles that will build clarity. We cannot decide when and where students will fight, but they will not thank us if we did not tell them when they could have fought sooner.

Unemployed graduates in Claimants' Unions will do nothing, organized on their own they would be only a few thousand, united not by geography, neither by present nor future power at place of work, but only 'formally'. Graduates, employed and unemployed, must be united in trade unions to fight unemployment. Do they know that when they leave College? Do they know which Union they should be in (and those 'Unions' they should not join)? Should Unions recruit on campus? Union leaders may not want it, but we have shown solidarity with white-collar Unions and have grassroots links with many in Universities up and down the country. The miners forced Gormley to thank students for their help on picket lines, is Jenkins so immovable?

One in three graduates applied last year to do teacher-training; they are going to teach in schools, colleges and universities. A worse staff-student ratio, a two-year degree, postgraduates having to teach to make up the grant - these are productivity deals. More education on less money is worse education, it is also jobs lost. We may not be at work, but we are in places where the work is disappearing and we have power to wield.

Of course these are only pointers to show that struggle is possible and the situation will vary from college to college. The immediate task is education, to make the analysis in each college that will sustain the long work of propaganda necessary before students enter directly on their own ground into the fight for the right to work.