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# Education Capitalism and the Student Revolt

by Chris Harman  
Dave Clark  
Andrew Sayers  
Richard Kuper  
Martin Shaw

an International Socialism publication 4s





3 copies for Porson's Green!

## Education Capitalism and the Student Revolt

This pamphlet could not have been written without help, guidance and criticism from numerous individuals. In particular we are indebted to drafts and ideas from Michael Kidron, Paul Gerhard, and Stephen Marks. Responsibility for any faults of analysis or facts, lie, however, with us, although as is inevitably the case with any collective production, we do not all necessarily agree with every single word contained.

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October 1968

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Revolution today is no longer the empty word that it has been for some decades in the West. No more do Western socialists need to look with envy on the struggling peasants of the Third World. It is the contradictions of advanced industrial capitalism which are now beginning to explode. Dramatic, worldwide convulsions have blasted away the limitations on human possibilities which capitalist prosperity had seemed to make final. They have reminded us that we still have great opportunities - larger than ever before - of realising the dreams of generations for a new world to replace the barbarity of capitalism.

Students have contributed more than any other social group to this change in the political climate. Campuses have exploded across the world - Tokyo, Berkeley, Nanterre, Berlin, Milan, Warsaw, London, and hundreds more. The strikers, sitters-in and demonstrators have rarely contented themselves with narrow reforms in their immediate situation. Consciously and creatively, the movement has challenged the whole structure and ideology of the university and bourgeois society. Everyone, the ruling class included, must recognise the reality of the 'student revolution'.

A revolutionary does not, however, bow down before facts - not even before the facts of revolt. The coming social revolution will be qualitatively different from anything the student movement has created. We must therefore ask ourselves how and why the student movement has developed, what its potentialities are and so suggest the course which it can take in the future. This is what we hope this pamphlet will contribute to the British student movement. We have grounded it in a study of the British situation; but it is necessary to begin by putting this in a global perspective. The student movement is a response to changes in the educational system and in society on a world scale.

### Education in Class Society

Education in general has the function of giving individuals the technical knowledge necessary for them to participate in social life. It has also the function of ensuring that they conform to the goals and norms of the society into which they are born. It is these aspects of education, of course, which are most commonly identified with it. Education is for many synonymous with knowledge.

But in class society, the educational system performs other



functions which are determined by the social relations on which that society is based. It does not simply impart knowledge, or inculcate norms of behaviour which would be necessary in any society. The educational system performs certain functions which are necessary only to secure the smooth functioning of society in the interests of the ruling class, and to maintain its class rule. Education under capitalism is characterised by its functions in social selection, in ensuring subordination to repressive authority, and in integrating people into a society in which they will be exploited.

Education in capitalist society is an important mechanism in the process of dividing up the potential labour force according to industry's requirements for labour of different degrees and types of skill. This process largely confines workers in the same (or a very close) level of employment as that of their fathers, but it also allows a few 'talented' members of the 'lower' strata to rise to the ruling class and so ensures a degree of renewal in that class. Equally significantly, this process legitimises inequality and privilege. If one does not rise to the top it is one's own fault, for not working hard enough... And finally, this process of social selection is an instrument for masking the fundamental differences in capitalist society (exploiter vs. exploited) by presenting society as a finely graded hierarchy with no sharp antagonisms. The 'middle' strata are given the illusion of superiority over the workers so as to create a cushion between the latter and the ruling class. Manual workers are led to believe that it is differences between types of wage labour (labourer/clerk, etc.) which are the crucial divisions in society, and that mobility within the class is the highest hope for most.

The schools function within this process largely by confirming a selection which occurs through the effect of income, the cultural conditions of the family and the social power of the class of origin. These factors work to perpetuate existing class divisions, and the school system is designed to push back to the class of origin the vast majority of the population. A minority is allowed to rise, but only by accepting the categories of the dominant culture and the given authority structure. Promotion is dependent upon the complete acceptance of the subordination of the student to the teacher first, and then to the head master. The more complete the negation of one's personality, the blind acceptance of authority, the greater the guarantees that the future will not lead to rebellions, that the authority of the boss will be accepted as a matter of course, and therefore the greater the rewards.

With the family the educational system is the main instrument for the transmission of the society's values. The difference is that in the family one of ten also receives values of a conflicting nature (a clear class consciousness in working class families), while in schools the values received are in general those of the status quo.

### The Development of Education

These functions of mass education in capitalist society are not the same as those fulfilled by the institutions of higher education in the period of the emergence of capitalism, or even in the early industrialism. This is simply because the mass of the population was excluded first from all formal education, and then from the universities. Indeed at first the universities played a marginal role even for the ruling classes. Universities were founded in the Renaissance by students, and professors were hired

to act as tutors. The ruling classes took only a mild interest in them, sometimes only being attracted to them out of the general revival of a desire for knowledge. Education, however, was not an integral part of the requirements of the ruling classes, indeed in some cases (Spain for example), was absolutely disdained by the aristocracy. The educational system was left to a subordinate class of intellectuals and bureaucrats that one then hired. The right to rule of the aristocracy was not challenged, and the traditional pattern to give the first son the family fortunes, leaving the others to make their way in the army or the church

In time, however, the educational system was used more and more by the ruling classes to enable their sons to spend a few years in relative leisure, to acquire a certain discipline of mind (thus the retention of classical languages in the curriculum expressly to develop with their highly complicated grammar the ability for closely argued logical thought), and above all to learn to rule, by which it was meant to learn to command.

In the pre-capitalist world instruments of social control were generally quite sufficient to deal with the exploited classes. The family sent the young ones to church; the church preached the sanctity of the family, respect of authority, resignation to one's state, and in exchange it promised a better lot in the future life. It is interesting here to note how the Roman Catholic church, which is historically the religion of very poor countries, has always laid a stress on resignation, and the Protestant churches a greater stress on hard work and self betterment (given their existence in a society where at least a minimal degree of self betterment was possible).

### The Rise of Capitalism

With the rise of industrial capitalism the educational system was changed, even if for different reasons and at different times in all advanced countries and institutional education arose for almost all classes.

The educational system became thus composed of two different parts, what we may call a 'popular' and an 'elite' stream.

Although early capitalism did not really require a skilled or even literate working class, 'popular' education was introduced relatively early. This was partly due to the need to save a valuable labour force from child labour and partly to condition from an early age the future work force.

The shift of the population from the countryside to the new urban areas had led to the breakdown of the traditional family structure. The church was also declining in importance in the new environment.

Parallel to this displacement of the traditional condition the new system of production had led to entirely new forms of organisation and resistance. The urban proletariat was proving to be very different from the old peasant classes.

Thus the distinguishing characteristic of the 'popular' educational system was its brutal enforcement of discipline. The literature and history of the time bear a powerful witness to this effect. The all important element was docility, acceptance of authority. The sooner the kind of conditions that were to be met in the factory were met and accepted the better. The teacher took the role of the boss, the prefects that of the foreman and the



policemen that were to hound the pupils for the rest of their lives. Education was in the system marginal, or better an excuse for its existence and more often than not it was not even attempted.

In contrast, the 'elite' system was continued and even slightly extended. Here too, however, education was, in a sense marginal. Since one's place in society was clearly defined by one's birth one could easily afford to spend one's early years in leisurely pursuits worthy of a gentleman, tutored by amiable eccentrics. The distinguishing characteristic of the educational system for the elite was that it was completely divorced from reality. Indeed great pride was taken in this. To reinforce the point one studied the classics, greats or such like, and education acquired a role similar to the 'Grand Tour', a pleasant diversion, an interim between the joys of infancy and the rigours of exploitation.

What was important was the acquisition of an attitude of mind: The firm knowledge of belonging to an elite, a belief in one's right to do so, and the ability to command. If some knowledge was to be useful later in life, this could easily be picked up later on the spot, and the educational system could remain untouched and uncontaminated by worldly considerations. It was thus that the universities could remain aloof ivory towers where students and teachers could indeed be a "community of scholars".

If there was some authoritarianism, it was only because the society as a whole was authoritarian. Indeed in many ways this educational system was a lot less authoritarian than society at large.

The intermediate jobs in society, those between the elite and the proletariat were taken by poor relations of the elite or their illegitimates, and these seldom required more than a minimal formal education. What knowledge or skill they required they picked up during a period of apprenticeship.

### Changes in Capitalism

The further development of the industrial society led, however, to a radical increase in the skill and knowledge needed by society. This increase was experienced at all levels. The increased competition in the internal and international markets made research and the immediate application of the latest techniques of the utmost importance. More and more technical knowledge came to be needed by the elite to rule, but also by the work force in order to man the ever more complicated industrial machinery. And as the size of the working units expanded and working methods advanced, an increasing gap was experienced between the direction and the shop floor. An increasing number of intermediates was needed both to relay and enforce orders from the direction and to provide information to the direction as it became more and more aloof.

British capitalism, the earliest to develop and the slowest to change woke up late to the fact that modern industrial technology requires not only sources of raw materials, capital, labour, and markets but a highly trained and adaptable labour force as well. Although even Balfour had admitted that education was "chaotic, ineffectual and utterly behind the times",

and bemoaned the fact that "although Britain was a great industrial nation, there is no organised training of those upon whose ability and skill the future of our nation depend", organised education continued to jog along in the tradition of British pragmatism.

The industrial revolution in Britain ignored the universities and schools: it was brought about by self made men. It was not really until after the second World War when British Capitalism had been forced to the outer limits of its technological inventiveness, that the years of pressure by the Labour Movement and the great socialist reformers began in earnest to take a hold on the consciousness of the ruling class. Forced into ever greater competition by the capitalist giant across the Atlantic, by revived European and Japanese capitalism, and by the ruthless efficiency of state capitalism in the Soviet Union, a whole new outlook on education began to emerge. When the words "Made in Britain" were no longer sufficient to guarantee the sale of the goods, when the Imperial markets ceased to be solely the prerogative of the British ruling class, Britain would have to streamline its educational system.

### The Birth of the Technological University Abroad

If the British ruling class only became aware of the need for "technological capitalism" after the end of the Second World War, this was not, however, the case with other capitalist countries.

In a sense, Britain by virtue of being the first country to industrialise had had a fairly easy task. Its goods were superior to those of its competitors, and furthermore in large areas of the world, i.e. the Empire, it had no competitors at all. By virtue of its early monopoly position Britain was able to hold a virtually unbeatable position of privilege for quite a time.

Other European countries trying to get a foothold of the international markets, either by competing commercially or militarily for them, had by virtue of their having arrived second an uphill fight from the start. America too had to fight, this time not to capture the international markets, but simply to render itself more independent of their previous economic forefathers.

The need to industrialise in a world where Britain had already established itself as the major producer of manufactures, and even more industrial machinery, where most of the technical discoveries were made and applied in Britain, impressed on these countries the need of a modern educational system that was to furnish the countries with the technological skill they required.

It was thus in the France of Napoleon the famous Ecoles Polytechniques' embryonic example of the technocratic schools of the future, were founded to provide the technical elite that the republic needed. These were established in all the countries through which the Emperor's armies marched and were retained when they were forced to retreat.

If in France the emphasis in the universities was for the production of technocrats in Prussia the rising capitalist class put a much stronger emphasis on territorial expansion as a way out of their impasse and the universities were closely geared to the needs of the army.



Thus these and similar countries, because of the relationship between their development and that of industrial capitalism as a whole, experienced a much earlier coordination between economic and educational development than was the case in Britain. But these changes only slightly indicated what was to come. Capitalism in its highly developed stages has had to introduce vast educational changes which are the basis from which the world student unrest has grown.

## EDUCATION TODAY

Modern capitalism is characterised by an acute competition for the international markets, in response to its basic contradiction of overproduction. In order to compete efficiently, capitalist enterprises require a high level of research which can be immediately applied at both the product and production stages. The tendency towards the concentration of productive resources, leading to both vertical and horizontal integration, is implicit in the capitalist dynamic of competition and accumulation.

Thus modern capitalism is characterised by particularly great educational needs. The ruling class has an ever greater need for an educated work force. The directing elite needs more technical knowledge to rule, and the armies of intermediaries between the elite and the work-force - the vast industrial bureaucracies above all - are expanding.

Thus modern capitalism has basically three different classes to educate. Now between the 'elite' and 'popular' stream there is an intermediate technological one.

What is important however is that the educational needs of the categories overlap to a considerable extent. The educational needs of the top 'technocrats' are not really different from those of the ruling classes. Their educational requirements have, in a sense, converged since education or knowledge is not any more marginal for either of them. At the other end of the scale the more skilled of the workers have a need for a general and technical education which is even frequently in excess of that of the lower echelons of the intermediate classes. Here too educational requirements have converged.

The convergence in requirements does not necessarily point to a convergence of the actual educational process, but there are, however, at present some trends in this direction. Two additional factors are here of primary importance.

The rise of parliamentary democracy in the West, and the organisation of working class resistance in the form of trade union and political movements, made it necessary to use the educational system in order to maintain unaltered the crystallised social relationships. Thus education today is used to give rise to the myth of social mobility. In order to achieve this, the more obvious positions of privilege within the educational system have to disappear. It is much better if there is a semblance of democracy - if your position in society is, as always, guaranteed by your social birth, but it is glossed over with an apparently meritocratic system. This 'meritocracy' has however a built in bias, and so always gives the same result, thus legitimising automatic positions of power.

The second is an economic reason. If the educational needs of different classes considerably overlap, then it is more economical to educate them together. In a world of harsh competition every little bit counts!

But this convergence is not an absolute tendency leading automatically to uniform educational institutions. The educational requirements of different kinds of labour cannot be fully reduced to common denominators, nor will privileges of any kind be quickly surrendered. We have seen in Britain that the rationalisation of the State secondary school structure, which has begun to replace the grammar and secondary modern schools by the comprehensive, does not imply any elimination of public schools: only the basis of entry needs to be modified to ensure adequate flexibility and mobility. At a university level, too, only marginal reforms are effected in the leading ruling class institutions such as Oxbridge. Capitalist educational reform does not yet threaten their existence in their present forms.

## Producing White-collar Workers

The changing problems of capitalism do, however, necessitate a massive transformation of the institutions of higher education, a change of much greater significance than any which takes place in the schools. Modern capitalism requires a vast expansion of higher education, and the changes which must occur are qualitative as well as quantitative. In earlier periods, universities served to educate the ruling class itself and narrow strata of the future professional groupings (doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.) who would themselves be considerably privileged compared to the majority of the population. In the present stage, the higher education system is required to produce in addition great masses of highly trained individuals whose destiny is to become white-collar employees. The intellectual element, science and its application, has become crucial to the development of economy and society. Large numbers of scientists, engaged in the research that is becoming a more and more necessary part of industrial and military development; technologists, even more directly concerned with this process; lower-level industrial management; administrators generally, with both extra specific skills and a general education to make them capable of higher flexibility; lawyers to service the giant corporations - purveyors of human manipulation; and teachers to perpetuate the whole process, as well as providing a higher level of general education for the rest of the expanding work force. All these performers of mental labour are becoming more and more essential to the system, a powerful productive force. They are becoming an important section of the proletariat - paid in wages and divorced from control of the productive process just as are manual workers. And it is to produce these very changed groups of workers, who are not even necessarily more privileged or better paid than any manual workers, that the educational system has undergone its vast expansion throughout the world in recent years.

These changes have profound effects on the political and social character of the student population. No longer part and parcel of the ruling class or of a privileged elite, increasingly destined for subordinate positions in society, often unsure even of this future and existing in an extremely insecure condition, students no longer identify automatically with the bourgeois order. They become open, in a way in which they have not been in the past, to political and social ideas and modes of action which would not have been possible to the comfortable middle-class students of earlier generations - the strikebreakers of 1926 and the like throughout the world.

We are not suggesting that there is any straight line between the changing functions of education in capitalism, the expans-



ion of higher education, and student revolt. For students anywhere to become conscious of themselves as a group opposed to the ruling classes and the existing social order, much more has been necessary. We must consider the ways in which the university expansion has been mediated in particular countries. In the United States the transformation of higher education is more or less complete, and conflict arises over the effect which the streamlining of education, dictated by the needs of industry, has on the prospects of intellectual freedom which is guaranteed by the whole liberal ideology of the university. In Germany and France, on the other hand, the universities have been vastly expanded, but most have not been reformed in order to adapt to changed needs of capitalism or of the students who are poured into them. The crisis arises from the same transition, but in a somewhat different form because of the different stages in the transition which each country has reached.

### The Political Crisis

We believe that the contradictions which have given rise to the student revolt have their basis in the changing economy of capitalism and its effects on higher education, which have been described and which we analyse in greater detail in the following chapters. But the forms which student revolt has taken are not simply determined either at the economic or at the educational level, or in a combination of the two. Otherwise it would be impossible to explain the timing of the revolt in different countries. The crucial factor here has been the political and ideological changes which began throughout the advanced world in the fifties and have developed very rapidly, although with great unevenness, in the last decade. Everywhere a younger generation which did not know the 'thirties and 'forties has arisen to question the political divisions which became fixed during that period. A new generation, which has absorbed and takes for granted the material progress of the last thirty years, can afford to examine the relevance of old political institutions to the present age.

Youth does not need to accept that the choice is between two repressive forms of society, capitalism and stalinism. The general disaffection towards both of these, and especially the erosion of both Social Democratic and Communist parties, have profoundly contributed to the student movement (and in addition, the students have contributed towards their decline). It is no accident that the real student revolt in Britain did not emerge until well into the period of Labour Government, or that in America was profoundly affected by the Vietnam war, that in Germany by the Grand Coalition, etc. Because of its origins the student movement can never involve the divorce from politics which characterises the trade union movements in the advanced West. As we shall see, it must develop its challenge to the University, but it has tremendous political choices and responsibilities as well.

## Chapter 2 - The Institutions of Higher Education

### Control

In the university sector of the higher educational system the issue of control is fairly complex. According to official ideology universities should be autonomous institutions, free to take decisions independently of outside pressures, at least as regards academic affairs. 'Freedom of institutions as well as individual freedom is an essential constituent of a free society...' The defense of academic freedom is seen as involving a constant struggle to prevent interference by the state, political groupings or, of late, even students, in the organisation of courses and the appointment of staff.

The whole elaborate structure for the external control of the universities (though not of other institutions of higher education), is determined by this ideology. The Government does not provide funds directly to the universities, but through the Universities Grants Committee (UGC) which allocates funds among the different claimants. Even this committee cannot determine in any detail how the latter are to spend their grants. This is supposed to provide 'an efficient shield against the intrusion into academic life and policy of irrelevant political influences'.

In this way the universities themselves are conceived of as 'communities of scholars'. Scientific impartiality is guaranteed by preventing external influences affecting them. From this standpoint, to worry about their role in society is to worry about the external constraints placed upon them, or rather it is to assume that their role is clear and unambiguous (Pursuit of knowledge etc), and that any outside controls are greater or lesser threats to this fundamental goal.

Even at this level it is clear that the 'autonomy' of the universities is being eroded in certain ways, official ideology to the contrary. We will refer to the tie up of big business and some areas of university activity later, but even in terms of direct financing, the UGC is far from the harmless body it is often credited to be. 'The majority of the Committee consists of people actively engaged in university teaching or research; the rest are drawn at present from other forms of education, from industry and from research establishments'. In fact, of the twenty members in 1963, four, including the chairman, held directorships of private industry, one being Chairman of Mobil Oil and director of nine other companies, another ex-Chairman of Unilever. Two other members held appointments in the nationalis-



ed industries<sup>5</sup> The recent freeze on the university building programme by the UGC is an indication of the gross external constraints within which the universities operate. But the debate about external control of the universities is likely to be misunderstood unless the facts of internal control are first made clear.

The Robbins<sup>1</sup> Report sums up the situation as regards internal university government in England and Wales (except for Oxford and Cambridge) as follows:

'The ultimate governing bodies are the Court and the Council. The Court is a general supervisory body; it is normally large and of predominantly lay membership. The Council is the executive governing body that actively controls finance and external relationships... it also has a predominantly lay membership''.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimate power lies with this majority of 'lay members', everywhere except at Oxford and Cambridge. Who are they? There is no overall survey available but we have one case study - that of the London School of Economics. There is no reason to believe that the situation elsewhere is fundamentally different.

The relevant section of the LSE report presents the following picture:

'Formal power at the LSE lies with the Court of Governors which meets but twice a year. Real power, however, lies with the Standing Committee of the Court, to which is delegated all power not directly vested in the Director (he is an ex officio member of this thirteen-man committee.)

A look at this Standing Committee over a number of years is as they say, revealing. There are now three members of staff on it (the three senior professorial Governors) and three ex-officio members viz., the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Court, and the Director.

### Lord Bridges

Lord Bridges (Director of Babcox and Wilcox Ltd., Brazilian Traction Co. Ltd., Equity and Law Life Assurance Society Ltd.) has been Chairman since 1957.

### F. E. Harmer

F. E. Harmer has been Vice-Chairman since 1954 (on the Court since 1947 and on the Standing Committee since 1948). Mr. Harmer is Director of P & O Steam Navigation Co. (dep. Chmn & Mgr), F. W. Harmer (Holdings) Ltd., Federal Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. (Chmn), Gray Dawes Westray & Co. Ltd., Hain-Nourse Ltd., London Life Assurance Ltd., Metropolitan Life Assurance Soc., New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd. (Chmn), P & O Fund (Insurance) Ltd., R. & H. Green and Selley Weir Ltd., Tradist Tankers Ltd., Westminster Bank Ltd., Westminster Foreign Bank Ltd., William Cory and Son Ltd. He is also Government Director of B. P. Co. Ltd. and some subsidiaries; in 1964-65, B. P. donated £6,435 for 'other purposes'.

The additional members (though not necessarily the three staff members) are drawn in the main from the same closed social field.

### W. M. Allen

W. M. Allen, a member since 1954 (excluding 1961-4) is the Executive Director of the Bank of England.

### Lord Tangle

Lord Tangle holds the following directorships: Bermuda Broadcasting Co. Ltd., Broadcast Relay Service (Overseas) Ltd (Chmn), Century Power and Light Ltd. (Chmn) Cilgin Ltd., City Commercial Real Estate Investors Ltd., City National Investment Trust Ltd. (Chmn) Cross and Herbert (Holdings) Ltd. (jt. Chmn) Edifice Trustees Ltd. (Chmn), Electronic Trust Ltd., Imperial Continental Gas Assoc. (Chmn), Independent Film Distributors Ltd., Industrial and General Trust Ltd. (Chmn), London and Buntley Property Co., London Maritime Investment Co., London Merchant Securities Ltd., Portman Buntley Estate Co., Rediffusion Holdings Ltd., Rediffusion TV Ltd. (deputy Chmn), Sanitas Trust Ltd., Second Industrial Trust Ltd., Technology Investment Ltd., Mount Everest Foundation, Trans-Artartic Expedition Ltd., Trust Union Ltd Trustees Confederation Ltd. (Chmn), Ultramar Co. Ltd. (Chmn), Walter Wangler Productions Ltd., Wembley Film Studios Ltd., William Deacon's Bank Ltd. (deputy Chairman), Yorkshire Insurance Co. Ltd. (joint deputy Chmn).

### Frederick Seeborn

Frederick Seeborn holds the following directorships: Bank of London and Montreal Ltd., Barclays Bank D. C. O. (Chmn), Barclays Bank Ltd., Century Insurance Co. Ltd. (Chmn) Century Insurance Trust Ltd., Credit Congolais S. C. R. L., Friends Provident and Century Life Office (Chmn) Gillett Brothers Discount Co. Ltd., Merchants Trust Ltd.

The pattern which emerges is one of heavy direct involvement in business and finance. For instance in previous years Sir Paul Chambers (ICI and insurance) and Sir Jock Campbell (owner of Guyana etc.) have been on the Standing Committee for 5 year periods. At present people like Sir Alan Hitchman, Director of the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority and Dr. L. Farrer-Brown, Director of the Nuffield Foundation (1944-64) make up the rest with the odd person thrown in for their 'educational' interests. That is, a majority of the Standing Committee at any time come from an extraordinarily narrow social stratum: the directors of finance, insurance, banking, the press and television, the higher Civil Service, members of London's Clubland (not the Whiskey a Gogo but the Reform and the Atheneum). It is this segment of the ruling class in our society who also control general educational policy within the LSE.

This general control by those from big business does not mean that this group is responsible for determining the content of courses or the selection of teachers directly. Other bodies and individuals with interests and attitudes of their own mediate between the governors and the concrete decisions taken about teaching and research.



## The professoriat

The most important of these other interests at work is that of the professoriat. In the civic universities this meets in the Senate together with a minority of delegates from the rest of the academic staff (according to Robbins never more than a fifth of the total senate). This is 'the apex of academic government'. It controls academic affairs, it makes major appointments and is the final authority on syllabuses etc. It is here that the allocation of resources between different faculties is agreed and clashes of interest between senior academics reconciled.

The professoriat cannot be regarded as a mere tool of outside interests yet neither is it fully independent. The whole operation of universities depends upon the ability of the Senate and Council to work together. In fact this never seems too difficult for either body. They are able to reconcile whatever differences of interest exist between them because they both accept the same fundamental values. It is important to stress that the compromises between the two sets of interests presuppose broader definitions of the university, determined by the outside interests and accepted by the professorate. The governors are 'the ultimate appeal in case of disagreement on the main academic body',<sup>10</sup> and furthermore the body that appoints the vice-Chancellor or Principal whose importance 'it would be difficult to overestimate' and who must be the centre of all discussions involving broad questions of internal policy'.<sup>11</sup>

The real content of internal university control may be summarised as follows: At the top are the Court and the Council, under a variety of names but in any case being in the main self-perpetuating; both composed in the past, now and probably for the indefinite future of a majority of members drawn from the top of the institutions which exercise power in the wider society, together with a minority of academics, usually senior professors who accept their definition of reality, at least to the extent of being willing to serve on boards which they dominate. This body structures the environment within which questions as to the running of the university are posed (and answered). Its final power of arbitration lays down the criteria for debate within the Senate. Those conforming to such criteria are those who will in turn be acceptable to the Senate and from whom, in normal circumstances, the professoriat (and thus membership of the Senate) will be drawn.

In this way the values of the ruling class permeate down from the top. Individual ruling-class interests do not in the main direct particular courses or spheres of research; rather the values of the ruling-class determine what is to be considered academically permissible and relevant as areas of debate and research. But this overall hegemony does leave room for other interests and aspirations to make themselves felt at lower levels. Here traditions of academic style and classical conceptions of what a university is, or even very occasionally the demands of science or scholarship, continue to play an important and independent role. Within an overall bias (which means that a chair of 'industrial relations' is taken for granted, while one in revolutionary agitation is inconceivable) there is considerable leeway. By ruling a whole range of considerations out of order a suffocating negative sanction is operated: within the area left for debate there is freedom for considerable and immensely valuable academic 'freedom' - such freedom is of course purely 'academic'.

## Power in the Techs

Within the other institutions of the 'binary' system the situation is not in the least obscured by any liberal metaphysics. As Anthony Crosland has put it:

"I would not suggest for a moment that they (ie the universities) are not responsive to any intimation of the national need that they can discern for themselves, or that Governments are able to give them. They have always been responsive and never more so than to-day. Yet, given the high degree of autonomy which they enjoy, there is a sense in which the other colleges can be said to be under more direct social control."<sup>12</sup>

This 'social' control is exercised without any buffers such as the UGC. Apart from a handful of institutions called 'polytechnics' in the London area, the technical colleges are administered by the local authorities, who appoint their governing bodies. These governors have powers considerably in excess of that exercised by their university equivalents: 'The governors should appoint the teaching staff, full-time, part-time and visiting...' (Ministry of Education Circular, 10-8-59). At the same time they are very much representatives of business interests: 'The governing body of a technical college should consist largely of people...who have current experience of the problems of industry and commerce...' (ibid). There is a certain ambiguity of control in that many local authorities are unprepared for the problems of administering what may be, in local authority terms, enormous institutions, and in addition finance for these institutions comes predominantly from the Treasury and the national pool. Thus considerable to-ing and fro-ing between the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Local Authority might occur.

The rewards for direct control however are expected to be significant. 'One of the most effective ways in which industrialists can effectively help themselves... is to serve on College Governing Boards or Departmental Advisory Committees'.<sup>13</sup> Thus with regard to the development of the Diploma of Technology in 1950's one of the most important factors it is said was 'the recognition and the active support given...by some of the leading industrial firms, particularly those of the electrical engineering industry'.<sup>14</sup> It seems that 'some of the pressure which these firms brought to bear on colleges, particularly Rugby and Stafford which they dominated, went close to infringement of academic freedom and local government autonomy, but this was greatly outweighed on the credit side by their sponsorship of students, their provision of industrial training and their tangible assistance in a dozen ways to the colleges which they supported'.<sup>15</sup>

The point about this sector of the educational system is that it has never been surrounded (and thus obscured) by any liberal mystique. The role of the technical college has always been recognised as that of providing a fairly direct vocational training whether this has been effectively carried out or not, there has never been any question as to who is in control. The actual carve up between the local authority, the local business community and other interested parties has not altered the fact that the technical college exists to serve the local 'community' ie the local industrial interests. No-one would look to these colleges as outposts, let alone bastions, of academic freedom.

## Higher Education and Modern Capitalism

Capitalism today sees education as having three inter-related sets of functions.



Firstly, it is responsible for the provision of skills increasingly demanded on the labour market.

'In our time progress - and particularly the maintenance of a competitive position - depends to a much greater extent than ever before on skills demanding special training' 16

Secondly its research, particularly in the fields of science and technology, becomes an integral part of the capitalist productive process. Merely to survive in the world market firms and nations have to apply new knowledge and new techniques of production.

'What nations sell in international trade is to an increasing extent the ability to innivate quickly.' 17

Thirdly higher education has to play its part in maintaining the general ideological control of the ruling class. As much is admitted with talk of 'the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship...' and the acceptance that it is a 'proper function of higher education, as of education in schools, to provide in partnership with the family that background of culture and social habit upon which a healthy society depends.' 18

The recognition and full acceptance of these functions by the universities has been a relatively recent development in Britain. Until well into the nineteenth century higher education meant 'the education, moral and physical as well as intellectual of the 'cultivated man' with its emphasis on 'character', 'service', poised and rounded personality and an easy amateur command of the non specialist skill appropriate to a ruling class in a world of steam navigation, gunpowder, and manuscript.' 19 Only a tiny stratum of the population entered the universities - in 1951 only 1.7% of the population had higher educational qualifications as compared with 7.3% in the USA. 20 As late as the 1930's nearly a quarter of the total university population was at Oxford and Cambridge.

The structure of higher education in this country is at the moment in the process of transformation. The mechanisms of the transition and its impact on the institutions will be looked at later. Here we shall deal with its outcome in terms of the relationship of education to the wider society and the effects of this on the content of teaching and research. In doing so we shall draw both upon the comments of those who are the driving force behind the transition and on examples from that society which seems to them to portray their own future to the educationists of the ruling-class: the United States of America.

### Technological Capitalism and the Physical Sciences

Modern capitalism is above all technological capitalism. Competition of increasing intensity creates the need for an ever more rapid renovation of the industrial structure. (The crisis over Britain's slow rate of growth in 1950's was, it will be remembered, a crisis about the second fastest decade of economic growth which Britain has ever experienced!) The permanent arms economy which underpins the expansion of the system is predicated upon a similar process of permanent innovation of the means of mass destruction brought about by the international arms race. In response to this situation unprecedented sums of money are spent on scientific and technological research. The universities are expected to integrate into the military-industrial complex as both the purveyors of trained manpower and of an unceasing stream of profitable knowledge and techniques.

The scientist or technologist may continue privately to regard his activities as disinterested. But objectively viewed they are big business. In the US total funds expended on Research and Development in 1961-2 amounted to 14,740 million dollars. Only about one sixtieth of these were provided by the universities, as against nearly a quarter by industry and two-thirds by the government. 21 Subsequently the American Council on Education stated that if these funds dried up 'the whole character of many universities' research programs (and in consequence of their instructional programs) would change. Many research efforts would have to be abandoned completely. Others would have to be sharply curtailed.' 22 Whatever the individual scientist thinks, his departmental, faculty and university heads will see themselves as in the market to sell whatever he has to offer.

'The university and segments of industry are becoming more alike. As the university becomes tied into the world of work, the professor - at least in the natural and some of the social sciences - takes on the characteristics of entrepreneur... The two worlds are merging physically and psychologically... The university is a mechanism held together by administrative rules and powered by money.' 23 The bluntness of this American writer is not found much in Britain yet, but even an old-style liberal like Robbins can discuss expenditure on education as 'investment on human capital' at considerable length. 24

Such institutional factors have a profound and distorting effect upon the development of science. In the past this was no more immune to the influences of the social environment than any other aspect of human activity, and this remains so under technological capitalism. Patterns of conceptualisation and concern developed in the wider society do not disappear when the laboratory is entered. As Karl Korsch has written:

'The content of mathematical systems is also conditioned historically, socially, economically and practically... There can be no doubt that before, during and above all after the awaited overturning of the socio-historical world, mathematics will be constrained also to undergo a transformation 'more or less rapid'.' 25

But this will reflect an overall change in the organisation and conception of life itself. Its form cannot be determined independently of such a process.

'It would however be ridiculous for a would be 'Marxist' to oppose a new 'Marxist' mathematics to the systems laboriously erected over the course of centuries.' 26

We do not wish here to enter the question of the 'autonomy' of scientific thought. Quite clearly there is a complex process of mediation between the development of a particular science at a particular time and that of the society at large. But equally clearly science, the attempt to conceptualise the world rationally, is influenced to its very core by the irrationalities of a decaying capitalism. The merger of science and industry is the subordination of science to concerns and interests which are imposed on it from the outside: but the precondition of any scientific progress is that science should be free to define its own problems and concerns, for progress in science is dialectical or it is nothing. 27

If science becomes a means its concerns are given by the powers that be. Today, not only is the development of its concerns distorted, but even its inner organisation has been violently manipulated. This can be seen most clearly in the case of research associated with defense projects. Into the university has been



brought "the same security apparatus that is operated in laboratories like those at Los Alamos or Oak Ridge".<sup>28</sup> With the discovery of fission and with some technical breakthroughs in electronics, physicists became the most important source a nation state could call on. A large number became soldiers not in uniform. And so they have remained."<sup>29</sup>

Much that used to be considered an integral part of the free development of science has of course been scrapped in the process. The most important results of research are not published. International co-operation between researchers is often ruled out for security reasons. Political considerations become a crucial part of the appointments procedure. Even the apparently most remote areas of investigation can become absorbed into militarist or industrial concerns. A renowned astronomer has charged:

"It is exactly what I have always felt about the space program - that the astronomers were being used as a façade of respectability for an essentially military project."<sup>30</sup>

### The 'Social Sciences'

Not only does modern capitalism require an ever-increasing number of technologists from the universities. It also requires explanation of the society it controls or, what for it is much the same thing, justification of its own power. The social 'sciences' are as much a growth section of higher education as the physical ones. While the number of students graduating in arts in 1966 was only a little over 10% higher than in 1962 there was a 50% increase in social studies graduated in the same period.<sup>31</sup>

This expansion is a corollary of the growth in size and complexity of industrial units and of the tendency towards integration of the state and industry. The extension and interpenetration of systems of bureaucratic control means absorption on an ever-increasing number of personal. Control of the work force becomes a central problem for those at the top, for sophistication of productive techniques makes direct physical compulsion of whole strata of workers less and less viable. Forms of informal passive resistance are increasingly difficult to detect; the power of formal shop-floor organisation is magnified by the close knit integration of the modern productive processes (the car industry offers daily examples of this). The vast expansion of subordinate roles within the bureaucratic apparatus itself makes it easier for the incumbents of these to succumb to pressures from below at the expense of demands for profitability which come from above. Defense of profitability with an internal police force (as Henry Ford did) or with an external terror apparatus (as Joseph Stalin did) become self-defeating in a complex productive machine which demands initiative as well as response from many of its productive workers. For the controllers of the corporate organisations which dominate modern capitalism the search is on for 'good' managers, for new ways of handling subordinates, for 'integrating the work-force', for 'understanding' the causes of discontent, for manipulating 'group dynamics'. So also is heightened the need to predict and to control future markets. In these areas the social sciences make their peculiar contribution.

The story of the tie-up between the interests of industrialists and the growth of industrial psychology and industrial sociology has been told too many times to be worth repeating here.<sup>32</sup> What is of relevance is that the sole aim of these sciences was to make workers amenable to directives from above. Excluded from discussion was any possibility that resistance by the workers could

be in any way rational. The founders of these 'disciplines' displayed a crude anti-unionism. If many of their successors do not, it does not make them any less whole-hearted in their support of the employing class. Their aim is to resolve conflict never to exacerbate it, even when this 'resolution' means restoring the stability of present relations of domination.

What applies to these disciplines applies with equal crudity to many others. The integral part law and commerce students play in the existing structure needs no discussion. Between them they constituted two-fifths of social science graduates in 1966.<sup>33</sup> But the social sciences also include subjects which cannot be simply categorised as purveying manipulative techniques or playing a straightforward servicing role for the existing organisation of society. The economist, the philosopher, the sociologist, aspire to be much more. And particularly because of crucial role students of the latter have played in student rebellions a much more sophisticated level of analysis is required. We can only give a brief outline here of the lines which must be developed.

Within all three disciplines there are crude apologists for the existing system. One has only to think of the works like 'The Open Society and its Enemies'<sup>34</sup> (which are perhaps best described as the capitalist equivalent of Zhdanovism), or the economists of the thirties for whom unemployment just was not a problem, or of a sociology which can produce the following type of scientific statement: "The unequal distribution of wealth provides an advantage for the upper groups but not at the expense of the lower classes."<sup>35</sup>

Yet their real defining characteristic does not seem to be so much apologetics as irrelevancy. Philosophers engage in endless debates over the meaning of words (linguistic philosophers), or the significance of aspects of empirical perception (phenomenologists) or resign themselves to an introspective self-indulgence (existentialists), or give up philosophy altogether for logic; economists construct elaborate models of economic behaviour that are mere tautologies, or build elaborate rationalistic castles in the air; sociologists either collect trivial data endlessly or else construct the most amazing typologies which no-one but their proponents could possibly wish to understand. Nowhere do the real problems of the twentieth century begin to be discussed. Students can graduate as 'sociologists' without ever having read anything on the fascism that swept half of Europe in the 1930's, or learnt anything of the preparations for mutual destruction which dominated the 1950's and still dominate the two major power blocks today. The war in Vietnam figures nowhere in the official curricula. Instead society in the abstract is studied; any positive content is generally so fragmented that it can fit equally well into almost any scheme.

An overwhelming proportion of the 'human sciences' is made up of such discussions: the permutation of concepts is endless, the meaning of the operation non-existent. At one level small groups at another functional prerequisites, can be and are debated ad nauseum. The nearest one gets to the real world of imperialism and poverty, war and nuclear preparations for war, alienation and exploitation, is in the odd sociological paper which attempts to conjure away these realities by a nifty redefinition. Never mind, New departments are growing up, new chairs are being created. Already sociology is taught a A level; soon it will be on the O level syllabuses.

### The Decline

The human sciences have not always been in this state. The hist-



ory of philosophy up to Hegel is the history of repeated attempts by men to define their position in relation to other men and the world in a total manner. It was a thing of central concern for its proponents, not merely a parlour game to be played by professionals in retreat from the world exercising their 'academic freedom.'

The Physiocrats, then Smith and Ricardo similarly saw in political economy an attempt to come to terms with a crucial aspect of human endeavour. Political Economy was the genuine science of an emergent Bourgeois civilisation which still believed in itself and in its mission to transform the world in its own image. One can chart the retreat from this vision merely by definitions of their subject matter given by successive economists. 'The nature and causes of the wealth of nations' (Smith); 'the laws which regulate the distribution of the products of the earth' (Ricardo); 'man's actions in the ordinary business of life' (Marshall); 'price and its causes and corollaries' (Davenport); 'human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means that have alternative uses' (Robbins). Note the marked impoverishment of content. The early classical economists aimed at a comprehensive understanding of the society they lived in. By the end of the nineteenth century even the best of them such as Leon Walras were concerned to grasp the system as a whole but only on the phenomenological level: they were not concerned with its internal dynamics and developments. After Keynes the retreat is complete. Neither explanation nor phenomenological description but the reduction of science to technique. That the system works is taken for granted. But it has minor aberrations and this requires technicians to service it. The scientific vision has lapsed and economics no longer questions its content or direction.

Sociology, too, goes through a comparable decline, though it never started from the heights which philosophy and political economy reached. It springs from two related sources. One is a reaction against the development of industrial capitalism, a theme which has been traced out for example in Robert Nisbet's work 'The Sociological Tradition'. Durkheim's ethical sociology derives from his conservative concern with the ills of industrial society - conservative in that his view of classes and class conflict never transcends the rubric of an 'abnormal' division of labour in order to be dealt with as a central feature of capitalist society. Weber's sociology too is fired by his overwhelming pessimism at the fate of industrial society, his attempt to grasp the significance of the pervasive bureaucratisation and rationalisation of modern life. The other source of sociology is, paradoxically a reaction against the most successful attempt to grasp the significance of capitalism as a world-historical system, viz that of Marx. Thus from its origins the concerns and conceptual structures of sociology are infused with ideological features of a very specific sort. One principle which still holds contending schools of sociology together is the need for each generation in turn to try to bury Marx where its predecessors have failed.

Sociology, not surprisingly, has managed to coexist with capitalist society fairly easily. Not only are capitalist governments prepared to put money into the universities to finance such 'scientific' activities but sociologists in turn are able to hire themselves out to business and the government. In the US there is hardly a college without its institute for social research, presided over by an academic of some standing. They do not inhabit ivory towers:

'Wilbert Moore and Merton have both 'served' industry.

Moore and Davis have 'consulted' with the government. Janowitz is 'interacting' with the military. Bernard Barber works frequently with industry.'<sup>36</sup>

The sums of money involved can be immense. In 1965 total government funds to Behavioral and Social Science Research amounted to some \$273 million. Of course much of this goes on 'applied' social science. But 'basic social science' gets its whack. 'The State Department and the Defense Department and the various cabinet level executives are the ones who make the highest use of basic social sciences. The State Department, through its diplomatic functions, has long been associated with political science and anthropology.'<sup>37</sup> One Army project, Camelot, which rose to fame when interdepartmental rivalries caused its cancellation, was allotted \$6 million for its preliminary 'feasibility study'.

This is not to argue that American sociologists have become corrupt or been bought off (though clearly many have!). This is rather the way in which a much more fundamental and far-reaching characteristic of society finds expression throughout the Western world. Its very presuppositions prevent it from ever achieving its ostensive aim vis the development of a science of society, and an understanding of social reality which such a science would lead to. With the development of academic sociology the concern with a particular society and its origins rapidly disappears from theoretical sociology. In the search for a 'generalising' social science all manner of strategies have been adopted with very similar results: sociological theory has become an abstract, barren conceptual wilderness in which even the original concerns of a Weber or a Durkheim, confronting real societies as they saw them, have vanished. The concern with 'theories of the middle range' and the uncritical acceptance of features of empirical reality ignore precisely those deep-rooted aspects of the social structure that condition particular social events. The only attempt sociology has made to view society totally has been in the various adventures of 'functionalism', the view that basically societies cohere. That such a view cannot deal with the problem of social change has become a truism even within mainstream sociology, yet attempts to resolve this dilemma have necessarily failed. At best they transform functionalism from a theory of social reality (and clearly an incorrect theory) into an interlocking set of concepts into which any information about reality can be fed without it worrying the proponents of such an approach. Sociological 'theory' is the negation of theory and ends in mere description:

'The pretended laws of sociology, which are taken as causes - that fact happens because of that law etc - in fact have no causative significance; they are almost always tautologies and paralogisms. Usually they are only a double of the observed fact. A fact, or a series of facts are described, by means of a mechanical process of abstract generalisation the relation of resemblance is abstracted from these, and this is what is called a law and has attributed to it the causative function. But in reality what has been found that is new? Hardly more than the collective name given to a series of facts - but there is nothing new in names.'<sup>38</sup>

If the name for an empirical occurrence is presented as a law - even if only a middle range one - analysis ends in apologetics. The present is justified as necessary, because it is what is.

No science can develop until people are prepared to criticise ruthlessly the immediate appearance of things. This involves the elaboration of theories which have significance beyond what is



immediately accessible. Any sociology which claims to be 'value-free' is in reality embedded in the values which already dominate society. But one cannot go beyond the present while coexisting peacefully with the controllers of the status quo. It is we who have to go beyond the present by testing our theories against the 'realities' of our society: conceptual criticism and practical criticism are inextricably united. Sociology is the pseudo-science of those who reject this, the ideology of those who participate in the processes of domination, but simultaneously pretend that they are not doing so. As such it fits in well into a society whose only excuse for continued existence is, on the ideological level, its own complacent platitudes.

The 'social sciences' are of central significance to modern capitalism. Not because they provide the magical means which are needed to make the masses accept their conditions uncritically. This Holy Grail continually eludes those who seek a final method of complete manipulation. The functionality of the social sciences lies in their defining what is to count as 'science' in our society and our institutions of education. At the same time, once their way of looking at the world is adopted, they provide a series of approaches to studying society all of which vie with each other in theoretical emptiness and tautological triviality. Functionalism accepts the status quo as necessary, the various empiricisms disintegrate the world into discrete and randomly related phenomena which can then never be combined into an adequate theory; so instead of theory we see a process of conceptual redefinition and refinement which can include every society because it says nothing about any.

The problems of imperialism, of colonial oppression, of a world system which keeps underdeveloped countries underdeveloped are transformed by today's neo-evolutionists into the contrasts between 'simple' and 'complex' societies. Tautologies about small groups leave no room for the war in Vietnam. The only room sociologists find for the practical testing of their theories is as adjuncts of imperialism - witness the recent vogue for studies of 'insurgency' and 'internal war'. But not only does involvement with US imperialism in South America or Asia expose the commitments that skulk under the head of value-freedom: the lack of real aid they can give to a ruling class on the retreat also exposes their own lack of science.

It is here too that we locate the source of the alienation of the student of the social sciences. His initial interest is in understanding and changing society. He is told that the field for him is economics or sociology. His training however consists in learning at best how to tinker with the machine called society at worst in the mastery of an esoteric jargon which it is alleged explains the world. It does no such thing. But the expectation is not that easily destroyed, especially as there is an available approach to the study of social reality which, distorted and bashed around though it be in academic courses, cannot be ignored and still seems to many students to provide a genuine foundation for a science of society. Marxism not only grasps the present reality in all its concreteness: it also points the way out of the present impasse. Pitted against it the social sciences appear as the sham they are.

### The Transition

In Britain the pressures for the universities to contribute directly to the immediate needs of capitalist society were much

slower in developing than they were abroad. The old universities remained unchallenged in their lofty eminence. They considered themselves as part of the leisure life of the ruling class, where the new generations of rulers could learn an appropriate life-style, away from and above the sordid pressures of the commodity producing economy on which their power and privilege was ultimately based. In turn, the owners of industry, with the easy-going attitudes of the first-industrialised, applied few of the pressures which were so crucial for the development of science and technology in Germany and elsewhere.

When the needs of science and technology began to be recognised, it was in an appropriately dilettantish manner. Pure science flourished as yet one more pastime befitting a member of the leisured classes.

'By the 1870's Oxford and Cambridge were ready to accept experimental science as an ingredient in education, but they were not prepared to jettison their cherished ideas of a liberal education in favour of the ideal of a university as a research institution.'<sup>39</sup>

The development of the new provincial universities, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century, modified this pattern but not fundamentally. They began to provide the necessary education for the new professions created by industrialisation. For a small section of the middle class such an education now became a necessity. But this neither challenged the basic prevalent conceptions of higher education nor provided a real technological output for industry. They combined acceptance of the educational values of Oxbridge with those of the established middle class. Insofar as they were considered to have utilitarian importance it was as a training ground for careers in the professions 'and these do not yet include employment for which higher technical education is required.'<sup>40</sup>

Here also while pure scientific research flourished, applied science developed only slowly. Technology tended to be regarded as something to be 'tolerated' because government and industry supplied funds for it, but basically to be an intrusion from the outside. Even as late as 1959 the ratio of technology to science students was lower than in any other industrialised country. Other indices of the lack of acceptance of technology are the poorer qualifications of technological entrants to universities,<sup>41</sup> and the relatively low percentage of middle-class children who opt for this field.<sup>42</sup>

The needs of the economy for technologically or technically trained personnel which were not satisfied under this structure were either ignored (until they belatedly caught up with the ruling class in the mid nineteen-fifties) or shunted off to a completely different set of institutions. These were to be less efficient and less well equipped, but much more taxing on their students.

A variety of institutions arose to fill the gaps left by the university system. Of some of the earliest, the Mechanics Institutes, Engels wrote:

'These new institutes are organs of the middle classes, and their purpose is to encourage the study of those branches of 'useful knowledge' which it is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie that the workers should possess... The middle classes hope... that by fostering such studies they will stimulate the inventive power of the workers to the eventual profit of the bourgeoisie.'<sup>43</sup>



The institutions which developed from these shared a number of features which sprang from their origins outside the mainstream of legitimate higher education. Spanning the whole range of technical education - from technical secondary education to a limited amount of postgraduate work - they were poorly financed, as the state of many of their buildings testifies even today. The technical colleges have had a changing and unstable role:

"They have acted historically as a residual category - making up the educational deficiencies of the primary and secondary system, providing vocational training rejected by the universities, meeting the needs for an intermediate level, and of those who, for a variety of reasons, wished to pursue a university course in a technical college." 44

In this situation the institutions could and in the main still can only operate in one way: at the expense of their students. The students on non-degree courses have the worst time of all. These are run on a variety of bases, but in general all are characterised by an extraordinarily high failure rate at every stage. The Ordinary National Certificate for example usually involves two years of part-time day and/or evening study while the student is pursuing his 'professional occupation': The Higher National Certificate requires a further two years of study after the ONC. After this even further study is required to obtain membership of the relevant professional body. The students have to work their way through courses whose defining characteristic is the need for rote-learning. The sole aim of the enterprise is to develop a minutely subdivided grading system along the way while restricting entry into the professional association insofar as this is possible. In 1956 of 5,786 students who had enrolled for certain National Certificate courses, only 26% passed their ONC and a mere 10% obtained HNC's. Comparable figures for the 1958 City and Guilds exams show, for a certain classification of colleges, success rates of only 28% for the Intermediate and 6% for the Final 45 (Failure to take HNC or City and Guild Final is not so much failure in the exams as

the decision not to proceed to this level of 'training') A similar situation prevailed for those students taking degree level courses (105,000 in 1962-63). Not only were less than a fifth of them full-time, 46 but even for the full-time students the average number failing to get degrees or the equivalent was 37% for those reading for the Dip Tech and 62% for those reading for the University of London external degree in 1960-61 47 The number of students who pass through these kinds of channels, generally on day-release, but possibly on block-release (for twelve week periods), or even sandwich courses is huge: the conditions to which they are subject abysmal. They are perhaps the worst victims of our educational system at every stage of its operation.

#### Post-war changes

By the middle of the twentieth century British capitalism started to feel the burden of its past neglects. It emerged from the second world war irreparably damaged as a dominant imperialist power. Its formerly unassailable political and financial position could no longer conceal the inefficiency of an old established industrial base. Indeed, the legacy of the past - a world political role and the position of sterling as an international reserve currency - were to be positive fetters on attempts to renovate industry, as successive financial crises have been witness to.

But attempts had nonetheless to be made to restructure British

society in order to confront the problems facing its rulers. Over a period of twenty years the state increasingly intervened in order to remove drags on over-all profitability. Nationalising the most backward industries in order to provide essential services and materials to industry as a whole, the state has also tried to force (or bribe) other industrialists to arrange their affairs in the long-term interests of the ruling class as a whole.

This state intervention, direction and 'planning' which now characterises modern capitalism has occurred at many levels, not the least of which is the educational one.

Already in 1943 the need for a much closer integration of education and the economy was beginning to be realised: As the President of the Board of Trade then said:

"The initial advantages that gave this country, almost for the asking, its place of pre-eminence in world manufacture and world markets have long been fading. More and more in the future, it will be necessary to rely on the quality of our industrial and commercial personnel"... "The country cannot afford to rest content with a system under which the technical education of its potential skilled workers, industrial leaders or commercial executives is left so largely to the initiative of the young employees themselves... From the point of view of the country's manufacturing industry, agriculture and commerce, the training afforded by a system of part-time education in conjunction with employment is long overdue... Much closer collaboration between industry and commerce and the education system is essential if the country is to develop a national system and the personnel with the training and the knowledge adequate to the needs of the future." 48

Qualitative changes begin to take place in the relationship between the state and the universities. Although the state had been financing the universities previously, this had involved relatively small sums - £1 million a year in 1920's rising to £4 million in 1940's. This was to rise to some £200 million by the mid-sixties.

The nature of this change was recorded in the University Grants Committee's report for 1946, when to the previous terms of reference (vis: "To enquire into the financial needs of university education and to advise the government as to the advice the government as to the application of grants...") was added the following:

"...and to assist the preparation and execution of such plans for the development of the universities as may from time to time be required in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to the national needs" (our emphasis). 49

From now on higher education was not to be judged by its ability to provide the ruling class with an appropriate life-style, nor with its success in the transmission of professional skills to the middle classes. From now on 'national needs' i.e. the demands of big business for trained personnel and a constant output of new techniques, was to be the criterion underlying all government concern with higher education. This concept is the unifying thread of a whole host of postwar reports and recommendations.

Nor was this change anathema to those with power in the universities:

"The needs of the state have almost without exception been met when the need has been shown clearly, precisely and authoritatively to exist." 50



## Robbins

But if there were not principled objections to the subordination of education to the needs of the imperialist state, there was a superstructure of attitudes and institutional arrangements which rendered such subordination both ineffectual and inefficient. Despite repeated investigations and proposals - in the Percy Report (1945) and the White Paper on technical education (1956) - both the relatively small percentage of the population in higher education and the imbalance in favour of the humanities and pure science remained. The Robbins Report was an attempt to remedy this situation. Appropriately enough it was presided over by someone whose own career epitomises the coming together of the elites in government, industry and education which characterises modern capitalism.<sup>51</sup>

The Robbins Report was the first systematic attempt to relate the structure of higher education to the needs of a modernised capitalism. Its proposal was clear:

'To review the pattern of full time higher education in Great Britain and in the light of national needs and resources to advise Her Majesty's Government on what principles its long term development should be based.' (our emphasis)<sup>52</sup>

So too was the rationale behind its recommendations for the expansion of higher education:

'The growing realisation of this country's economic dependence upon education of its population has led to much questioning of the adequacy of present arrangements. Unless higher education is rapidly reformed, it is argued, there is little hope of this densely populated island maintaining an adequate position in the fiercely competitive world of the future.'<sup>53</sup>

And, if there is further need to underline his point, Robbins has written elsewhere:

'...I am sure that if we do not move forward on something like the scale indicated by the recommendations of our Committee we are in real danger of being outclassed and undersold.'<sup>54</sup>

Given this view of the role of education, it is not surprising that the report should be willing to subject the universities to scrutiny under the same criteria of success as any other part of industry:

'The general purport of our argument should be clear enough. The immeasurable element in the return on suitable investment in higher education is positive. Therefore, even if it could be shown that the return on the volume contemplated in our recommendations, as measured by earnings differentials, was likely to fall below the general return on commercial investment - which we are inclined to doubt - there would still be this important element to be added in. The problem of allocating resources still remains and there are other forms of investment that also bring 'external economies'. But there is, we submit, a presumption that the total amount can increase quite substantially in comparison with what has been spent hitherto without incurring discredit by comparison with ordinary commercial investment or with investment in most forms of nationalised industry.'<sup>55</sup> (Para 628)

The recommendations of the Robbins Report can be divided into

two sorts. The first concern the extent of expansion of education in general and technology in particular. These were immediately welcomed by the Government and have been implemented even faster than Robbins envisages. Thus there were, by October 1967, 199,400 students in the universities and 95,000 in the training colleges compared with Robbins' estimates of 197,000 and 75,000 for these institutions.<sup>56</sup> Thus on the crude level of total numbers in training, Robbins has already been surpassed.

The second set of recommendations concerned the structure of the educational system. Here Robbins favoured a continuation and a strengthening of the university system. This was to be extended so as to include the training colleges and also the more successful areas of the binary half of the system. There was to continue to be a strong buffer between the universities and direct government interference in the form of the UGC.

### 'Academic Freedom'

It is in this area of the report that the Labour Government, dedicated to dragging British capitalism into the technological era, has sacrificed. Robbins himself still adheres basically to the conceptions associated with the view of universities as elite institutions. He wants them to accept the functions ascribed to them by a changed capitalism, but not for them to alter their mode of operation in any fundamental way. Academic life for him should still be relaxed, immune from the immediate cares of the world of business, without however denying the requirements of the latter. In this he reflects the concerns of large numbers of academics that they should not be subjected to the criteria of immediate profitability. They fear a situation similar to that which has developed in the United States where

'University becomes a workplace... Whatever the function is - teaching undergraduates, training graduates in research or doing research - there is an expectation that the academic will do a finished job... At the graduate level and in research there the aim is to turn out finished products, and at all levels there is a conscious attempt to measure quality and quantity of production.'<sup>57</sup>

British academics have nothing against capitalist society. But they do demand a privileged position in it, protected from its direct pressures. They will serve it faithfully provided their subordinate interests are met. Their special place they elaborate in the liberal ideology of 'academic freedom'. Academic 'freedom' has never meant any fundamental questioning of dominant capitalist values: it has always been the 'freedom' to accept the society as it is in its broad outlines. It was never supposed to lead for example, to a questioning of the necessity for the state to manufacture weapons designed to exterminate civilian populations or to engage in repeated wars of colonial oppression, (though, revealingly enough, it was taken to mean that students at Essex in 1968 could not question such activities.)

Robbins himself is quite unambiguous on the matter:

'...it is impossible to interpret that principle (ie the principle of academic freedom) as implying a right of the universities to operate independently of the needs of public policy.'<sup>58</sup>

However, in the Robbins Report itself the red meat of ruling-class interest is mixed in with various hangovers from traditional liberalism and Robbins believes that there is in the recommendations 'an ethical element... quite outside the consideration of returns.' The major difficulty which he comes up against in



his attempt to marry the interests of the old academic community and the needs of modern capitalism lies in the fact that expansion of education in the university sector leads to greater expenditure than a similar expansion outside the universities. It is here that the ruling-class has broken with Robbins. British capitalism, attempting to renovate itself as rapidly as possible has refused to pay the price which a 'liberal' solution of the problem would demand, or to put it differently, liberalism is no longer competitive.

### Functional education

After much hesitation the Labour Government has committed itself to major expansion of higher education outside the universities. If our economic straits allow any expansion of higher education that is, it will be concentrated on the proposed polytechnics, rather curious institutions which are intended to combine the benefits of direct control with the range of a university education, but without giving rise to any of the nasty illusions which a liberal education can still foster. (these illusions arise not from the content of university education, but because the mere fact of the university teacher refusing to become positively involved in capitalism and its needs is increasingly a threat to the system.)

The decision to develop the Polytechnics has caused considerable confusion in the binary sector of the system. Some have welcomed these proposals as strengthening their position, some have seen them as confirming in perpetuity their second class status. In reality both standpoints are correct. The binary sector is seen as directly part of the economy. Not for its teachers the privileges of academic life, the cloistered retreats where pure scholarship (or laziness) can prevail. They are instead part of the competitive world. They will be tested by how well their product satisfies the requirements of industry and the state. They will continually be under fairly direct scrutiny. But at the same time they are offered the chance to justify themselves to the powers that be in a way not open to those in the universities. As simple managerial criteria dominate the technical institutions the possibilities of advancement open up new worlds to those who teach in them. Those who really take to the rigours of such a life are offered rewards appropriate to the successful educational entrepreneur. No account is taken, of course, of those who fail, or of the students who will have to absorb the shocks which result from the absence of any protection against external pressures, and the totally inadequate internal facilities.

The lines of the system of higher education which shall see British capital safely into the technological era are becoming clear. Barring major 'catastrophe' (such as a socialist revolution) the new modes of domination are starting to sort themselves out. Even Lord Robbins' liberalism is affronted as 'We are now confronted with the prospects of an educational caste system more rigid and hierarchical than before'.<sup>59</sup> At the top will remain Oxford and Cambridge, still devoted chiefly to educating the ruling class (about two thirds of their entrants are from public schools, and the Franks Committee did not propose any fundamental change in this for Oxford). Here the old elite approach to education will prevail, although infused with those new skills needed by those who rule in industry and the Civil Service. For these entrants, the children of the bourgeoisie no great functionality is required. A certain 'lifestyle' resulting from broadbased courses is still considered essential.

'The Federation of British Industries, to my surprise spoke

with great approval of *Literae Humaniores*... of PPE and of the new school of Engineering and Economics.'<sup>60</sup>

The civic universities will continue to train a tiny proportion of the ruling class, offering a small minority of their students who do well in the academic and social rat race a chance to share a few of the bourgeois privileges. In the main however they will turn out similar sorts of products for the new capitalism as the binary sector, but inadequately prepared for this task because of the prevalence of old attitudes and interests. As one vice-chancellor has described the scene:

'Round every senate table sit men whom the word university stands for something unique and precious in European society: a leisurely and urbane attitude to scholarship, exemption from the obligations to use knowledge for practical ends ... At the same table sit men for whom the university is an institution with urgent and essential obligations to modern society... a place which society regards as the pace-maker for scientific research and technical progress.'<sup>61</sup>

This tension between tradition and functionality, between a liberalism which could be afforded in the hay-day of imperialism and crude economic exigencies governs educational policy today.

'Production, productivity, exports - everything we have achieved at so great a cost - can be imperilled by ill-considered industrial action...'

said Harold Wilson at the 1968 Labour Party conference. They can be even more imperilled by an educational system which does not respond immediately to the demands which a rapidly changing capitalist world makes on it. It is in order to bring about a fusion of the educational and industrial worlds as cheaply and as quickly as possible that the government pursues an 'anti-university' line, of which the decision to subject the UGC finances to parliamentary scrutiny in the most recent manifestation.

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2. Prof. Macrae, defending the appointment of a new director at the LSE, autumn 1966, seems to have set this particular bandwagon rolling.
3. Robbins, op cit p 237
- 4 Robbins, op cit p 235 (our italics)
- 5 UGC University Development 1957-62 (Cmnd 2267) and Who's Who 1968.
6. Robbins, op cit p 217



7. That the Court of the university is supposed to represent the crystallisation of 'society' within the institution was delightfully conveyed by the *Financial Times* which, trying to understand the sit-in at the LSE, wrote, on 15th March 1967:  
'At the one end of the puzzle there are the student pickets pale, bearded, dressed in jeans and any old jacket. At the other is a Court of Governors whose 80 members span the top of British society: the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Robens; Professor Cairncross and Lord Plowden; Lord Butler and Bernard Hollowood; Reginald Maudling and Donald Tyerman - it is hard to say who is not on the list. Have these men failed?'
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### Chapter 3 The Students

We have tried to analyse the functions which higher education serves in modern capitalism, and the relationship of educational changes to trends in the development of capitalism. Our main concern in this pamphlet is to show how the student movement has emerged in response to these changes, as well as the more general political crises, and to argue the course which we think the student movement should take in the future. In chapter 4 we analyse the conflicts which have occurred; But first it is useful to examine who the students are - where they come from, how they are selected, and where (in capitalism's scheme) they are going to.

A wealth of sociological studies has exposed - sometimes almost accidentally - how in Britain more even (but not much more) than in some other capitalist countries, the educational system operates a very effective system of social selection. This selection involves, in great measure, sorting out the sons and daughters of one section of the working class from another, and much of the sociological data is confusing in so far as it refers to these sections (manual workers and clerks, for instance) as different 'classes'. In the descriptions which follow we have had inevitably to reproduce such confusions; but is as well to bear in mind that the undoubted divisions between unskilled, skilled, clerical, professional and other workers are not class divisions. For this fact is very important in helping to explain why many in an apparently very highly selected, elite group such as students are, should nevertheless come into fundamental conflict with the capitalist system.

#### The Early Years

The process of selection begins almost at the moment of birth. From conception on, the child of manual working class parents has less chance than the 'middle class' child of succeeding on the educational ladder - and even, less chance of living at all. For a comparison of infant mortality rates shows that the children of semiskilled and unskilled parents are twice as likely to die before the age of one than are the children of middle class parents :

Mortality per Thousand Births, 1950.	Social Class Of Parent, According to Registrar-General's Classification <sup>(1)</sup>				
	I	II	III	IV	V
	17.9	22.2	28.1	33.7	40.7



During the last 50 years the survival of infants has increased dramatically in each social class, but the relative levels of the mortality rates between the classes have been maintained. Indeed, the relatively unskilled manual workers are worse off today than they were in the past. (11)

The child learns his social culture mainly through the language that his parents and social contacts use. This process of learning begins when he can respond to, but not make, verbal signals (111) That is, the child will start to acquire from the age of one the necessary tools of communication that will enable him to make the best use of whatever educational facilities are offered. Bernstein has shown that the middle class child learns to communicate in the same sort of language as that which will be later used in the school situation: the socialisation of the child takes place within a certain formally articulated language structure. The future is conceived in direct relation to the educational and emotional life of the child. Consequently, the child grows up in an ordered, rational structure in which his total experience is organised from an early age. The school is also institution in which every item is linked to a distant future and in consequence, there is no serious clash of expectations between the school and the middle class child, or between the teacher's values and those of the child.

The lower working class family structure on the other hand is less formally organised than the middle class to educate the child. The linguistic relationship between mother and child is one in which the language structure limits the ability of the mother to verbally elaborate her subjective meaning. The working class child is sensitive to a form of language use quite distinct from the middle class usage. Thus, his language is confined to a 'public' language. Compared to the middle class child who has mastered both formal and public language, the working class child is at a distinct disadvantage in the school. He discovers the limitations of his own language structure - which contains a large number of idiomatic, transitional phrases from which he can choose - compared with that of the middle class child who has learnt to use language so that he can select to mediate his individual feelings. The language structure of the teaching situation is both formal and public. The language of the working class child is public only.

Add to the language influences at work on the child other factors such as the availability of books and reading material; the mother's attitude to her children; the number of children in the family; the availability of good nursery and primary education in the dead hearts of the industrial cities compared to the middle class suburbs; the general family orientation; the sickness or health of the child (4) It is then clear that by the time the child enters the infant school his educational chances are to a large extent determined by the accidents of his birth.

#### From Primary School to Grammar School

From the moment that the child enters the educational system, the middle class child is likely to pull ahead more than the working class child. The choice of primary school shows a class orientation: only 16% of working class parents send their children to a primary school getting 31% or more children into a grammar school compared with 44% of the middle classes. (5)

A school which already had a high reputation for getting children

into the Grammar School will give the child the sort of education necessary to get over the 11plus hurdle into grammar school. Douglas found that after testing a representative sample of children at eight and eleven, with standard tests, that the children at the favoured schools drew further ahead than those who were not as such schools. Children from all social classes benefit from a good school environment, but such an environment is more generally available to middle class children. Douglas shows that in all aspects of the child's educational life, the middle class child benefits far more than the working class child.

Two examples will suffice to show what is amply illustrated as a general principle. A. He adopts a series of standards about the parents' attitudes to their children and shows from this how the child from the middle class home benefits on every count. Assessing the parents' standards of infant care, of infant management, use of medical services, interest in school progress, desire for child to go to grammar school and the wish of the parent for the child to stay on at school, tested by doctors, teachers and so on throughout the country, he found the following figures to apply in at least four of the above criteria:-

Upper Middle Class	Lower Middle Class	Upper Working Class	Lower Working Class
81%	58%	34.6%	19.6%

B. Douglas tested the children at eight and at eleven years with a standard battery of intelligence tests. He found that children from the middle class tended to improve their performance as they went through school whereas working class children tended to deteriorate :-

		Average Test Score At		Change
		8	11	
Middle	Upper	56.64	56.99	0.35
	Lower	52.96	53.88	0.92
Working	Upper	49.99	50.05	0.06
	Lower	48.05	47.55	-0.50

Thus, in the school situation, the various factors acting upon the working class child tended to make him lose ground in relation to the middle class child. These factors vary - language structure, parental interest, teacher's attitude, quality of schooling - but they combine to push the working class child back relative to the middle class child. Thus, of children in the ability range between 55 and 57 on the test scores, 51% of the upper middle class children got to the grammar school, compared to 22% of the lower working class children. Thus, of children who have similar intelligence and ability as measured by standard tests, the upper middle class child was more than twice as likely as the working class child to get into the grammar school. This is most acute amongst children of marginal ability - the 'borderline' cases, the 'late developers' etc.

Floud and Halsey, in another standard work on South West Hertfordshire show that not only does the middle class child of similar ability to a working class child have a better opportunity of going to the grammar school:



Ability/Opportunity Ratios	1952	1954
Professional & Managerial	1.10	1.23
Clerical	0.92	1.00
Supervisory, small shopkeepers etc.	1.04	1.00
Manual Workers: skilled and unskilled	0.97	0.89
	1.00	1.00

- but that in any year when there is a 'bulge' those children who are of marginal intelligence will not get into the grammar school although in previous years they would have got into the grammar school. This, again tends to work to the detriment of the working class child.

Thus, it seems that "the division that leads to the grammar school is the one that occurs around seven or eight on the basis of reading ability" (7.) Furthermore, it is this division, which is already to a large extent predetermined by the child's social background, which will determine the rest of his career.

### The Grammar School and the Secondary Modern

It is difficult to lay down the exact percentage of children who go to a grammar school as opposed to attending some other form of secondary education, since not only do arrangements vary greatly from area but also the distribution of numbers in each age-group will lead to differing interpretations for each year.

What is known, however, is the distribution of social class categories within the grammar school in the period with which we are mainly concerned :-

1951 (Table 7 of the Early Leaving Report)

Professional & Managerial	Clerical	Skilled Working Class	Unskilled Working Class
24.6%	10.4%	44.3%	20.7%

1961 (From Table 12 Statistics of Education (HMSO) Supplement to Part 11)

27.2%	14.4%	42.2%	14.2%
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The inference to be drawn from these figures is that during the period that most of the present student population were coming into the grammar schools, there was a tendency to further exclude semi-skilled and unskilled workers' sons from them; their representation during this period drops from about 21% to nearer 14%. The additional places were taken up during this time by the members of the clerical and professional classes' children. The children from the working class tended to be catered for by the Technical, Comprehensive and bilateral schemes during this period:

1961 Distribution of social class categories in technical, bilateral and comprehensive schools. (From Statistics of Education, 1961 - HMSO.)

Professional & Managerial	Clerical	Skilled Working Class	Unskilled Working Class
11.3%	9.6%	54.1%	24.9%

We are now able to get a clearer picture of the nature of children in grammar-type schools in 1961 compared to those in the other secondary schools :-

### Registrar-General's Classes:

'Grammar-Type' :	1	11	111	1V	V
Ind. Efficient	22%	4%	-	-	-
Tech.	9%	10%	7%	6%	5%
Grammar	40%	30%	17%	13%	7%
Other Sec.	29%	56%	76%	82%	88%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

But not only did the gap between the classes widen, during the period we are considering, in terms of grammar school entry. It is reflected too in the achievement of the children in the schools as measured by 'O' Level results. Lacey (8) found that when the figures for success at 'O' Level for the years 1951 and 1961 were compared not only was the representation of working class children in grammar type schools lessening: there was also a decline in performance as measured by passing five 'O' Levels.

Father's Occupation      Changes in % Success in 'O' Level      Changes in Representation of Class Categories in Schools.

	A Grammar School	B Grammar and Comp.	C Grammar	D Grammar and Comp
Professional & Managerial	8%	-5%	2.6%	-3.4%
Clerical	9%	-2.2%	4%	2.2%
Skilled	8%	-10.3%	-1.9%	3.7%
Semi-& Unskilled	10%	-5.8%	-6.5%	-2.4%

If columns B&D are compared, it becomes obvious that the position of unskilled and semi-skilled worker's sons is the only one marked by a substantial decline in representation in grammar-type schools, and in success at 'O' Level.

It appears that, despite the wonderful promise of the 1944 Education Act, the generation of students who are now in the universities have been progressively filtered out by social selection and examination (9) When these factors are added to the inability of a working class home to support a school child after the statutory leaving age, plus the mass exodus that occurs after GCE 'O' Level, it is apparent that those who get into the sixth form and thus into the running for the University are those from homes with the cultural and financial orientation to education that will help the child along the way. Even among children who do well in the tests to get into grammar school suffer a deter-



ioration whilst there that is reflected in their GCE performance if they come from homes in Class IV and V. (10) Thus, the child most likely to enter the sixth form is the one who was not only in the top third of his age group at entry, but also has Class I parents. (11)

As Douglas has said (12) 'In the schools, we are constantly making predictions which are self-fulfilling owing to a system by which we make an initial judgment of a child's worth and thereafter continuously reinforce it by the quality of the teaching he is given, and by the opportunities he is offered.'

### The Explosion in the Knowledge Industry

This process of selection has been developed as part of an enormous expansion of the numbers of students at all levels of the educational process, and especially in higher education. Before we proceed to examine the effects of selection in the student body, and the qualitative changes in the social destinies of the mass of students, it is necessary to outline the sheer quantitative aspects of the change in higher education. If we consider the following table we see clearly how the expansion has taken place:

Students in Higher Education in England & Wales.  
1900 - 1967, in Thousands.

	University	Teacher Training	Further Education	All
1900/1	20	5	-	25
1924/5	42	16	3	61
1938/9	50	13	6	69
1954/5	82	28	12	122
1962/3	118	55	43	216
1966/7	154	85.5	54.4	294.3

Thus, in the eight years '54 - '62, the student population increased by nearly 100,000. In the five years between '62 and '67, (when the university population was 199,000), the university size increased by over 70,000, or half as much again.

Even given this growth rate, the Robbins' Report estimates have been made to look conservative when we realise that for the Academic Year '66/67, the total number of students was 27,300 more than was estimated for. Thus, in the 'white heat of the technological revolution', the six years between the commencement of the Robbins Report and the Academic Year '66/67 saw the number of students in higher education just about double.

This full-time explosion was achieved by an unprecedented programme of university and training college expansion, by upgrading and expanding the ten CATs to University status, and by an immense increase in the number of places to degree standard available.

This rapid extension of the universities and colleges was said by Robbins to be intended to cater for the 'bulge' of post-war babies, but it now seems likely that the number of qualified applicants is continuing to rise despite the levelling out of the population curve. For example, Robbins estimated that in 1965 there would be 64,300 students with 2 'A' levels qualified to go to a university. In fact there were 73,200. The university places available have almost doubled. In 1961 65% of students with minimum entry qualifications got places: 1965 only 57% did so. This is particularly so in the Arts and Social Sciences,

where of those who applied and were qualified, only 36% got a place in the year '66/67. The number of students entering the Social Sciences between the years 1962 and '66 rose by over 120%.

Whereas Robbins called for expansion to a target of about 204,000 by 1970, the universities themselves are now calling for expansion to about 250,000.

This enormous expansion in education is reflected at all levels, as more and more young people stay on at school and take the 'A' levels necessary to get them into some form of higher education. There are about 18,000 part-time students now; there are expected to be 30,000 by the '70s. 30 polytechnics are being established to give degrees in the secondary sector of the misconceived binary system. It is envisaged that by the mid '70s, there will be 60,000 students at polytechnics alone. The education colleges already 14,000 ahead of their Robbins targets, are expecting to have expanded to over 110,000 by '73/74. The new target for students in full time education in '71 is likely to be about 380,000 instead of the 312,000 envisaged by Robbins.

Thus, we see at every level a massive expansion of educational facilities on offer. Education investment is now very big business indeed :-

Annual Expenditure on Education (14)

54/55	....	£560m
64/65	....	£1784m

Education now takes up 5½% of national expenditure, compared to 3½% ten years ago. Teachers in full-time maintained schools have increased from 240,000 to 290,000 over the last ten years. There are now the equivalent of 316,000 full-time teachers in the educational system. (15)

### Who Are the Students ?

Selective tests at every level of achievement have ensured that at each stage in the educational process, among those of the same measured intelligence, the lower social classes drop out first. We have shown how at each level - birth, social class learning, reading ages, eleven plus, and 'O' Level there is a built-in tendency to emphasise the class nature of education. At the university, this illustrated in the following manner :-

I. Q.	Father's Social status	% to Higher Education Degree	% to Higher Education Other	% to work (including Part-time study)
130	Middle class	37%	4%	41%
	Working class	18%	12%	30%
115-29	Middle class	17%	17%	34%
	Working class	8%	7%	15%
100-114	Middle class	6%	11%	17%
	Working class	2%	4%	6%

(From Robbins Appendix 1 Section 2 Table 4)

Thus, the middle-class child is the child best equipped to jump



every hurdle on the path to excellence. Robbins also found that almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the undergraduate entry in the early '60s (71%) came from the families of non-manual workers, and there has been no significant change in this figure despite the massive expansion of the universities. Amongst the middle class entrants, most (59%) came from the professional and managerial group, and the remainder were the children of clerical workers.

Within the university system there are also finer gradations that exist. At Oxbridge, in the session 63/64, 2/3rds of the admissions were from the 5% of the population who go to an independent school. Whereas two out of five qualified grammar school boys applied to Oxbridge, three out of every four qualified independent school boys applied. Of the grammar school boys, the majority did not do so, because they did not have the money or the facilities to stay on in the sixth for the extra year.

At the Redbrick universities, the number of public school boys in the intake was about 1/3, yet at Oxbridge, 61% of all open awards went to pupils at the 200 schools belonging to the Headmaster's Conference, and only 35% went to boys at mixed State grammar schools. Yet, the number of pupils at the State schools is five times greater than the number of those in the other categories. (18)

At a typical Redbrick university - Manchester - Brockington and Stein (19) analyzed data of the intake of students into the university and found that the entry of Classes 1 and 11 was greatly in excess of what one would have thought based on predictions from the distribution in the population at large. They found in the case of Class 1, that about six times the expected number entered the University, and in the case of Class 11, about three times the number entered. On the other hand, entries from Class 1V and V were a fraction of what one would expect - a quarter of class 1V and a tenth of class V. They found that the social class distribution of women entrants showed an even greater class shift. The upward shift in social class distribution already marked at grammar school level had become greatly exaggerated at university level, so that the managerial class children had 54.7% at a redbrick university, whereas the children of unskilled manual workers were only 1.6% of the university population.

The new technological universities were granted their charter as a result of the recommendations of the Robbins Report. Altogether, there are now ten in England & Wales, plus Herriot Watt in Scotland. Their location is generally in parts of the country that would most likely benefit from having a University-status institution in their locality. (20) Originally Colleges of Technology, they were upgraded into CATs as a result of the 1956 White Paper on Technical Education. Although the student population changes every four years, they still retain a lot of the staff and the attitudes of their Technical College days. The expansion programme of the technological universities has been phenomenal:

e.g. Salford	June '65	1,945 students	
	October '67	3,000	"
	October '73	5,000	" (projection)

But this tremendous expansion has often meant that their amenities are impoverished compared to the older universities. Libraries, Halls of Residence, and Student Unions have all tended to be neglected, and the Government cut-back on university building has exacerbated a difficult situation.

The student body in the technical colleges is almost exclusively male (Birmingham for instance, had 7% female students in 65-66), due to the lack of emphasis on social studies and arts subjects.

Sanford found in his study of technologists in the making (21) at Bristol College of Technology in '61-62, that by comparing the student population there with that at Nottingham University, and the results of the '51 Census, that they were 'more nearly representative of the community as a whole than are their university counterparts. 'The over-representation of Classes 1 and 11 and under representation of Classes 1V and V is considerably less marked than at Nottingham University. Over half the students at

Bristol had not thought of applying to a university, and of those who had, over half withdrew their applications or turned down university places on acceptance by the college - 'reflecting a positive preference for vocationally oriented courses'. As well as the more working class orientation of the technological universities. There was a striking absence of political clubs at Bristol, and more students attended industry - run sports clubs than the college ones. Enquiries into their social background revealed that they were predominantly Conservative voters, with lower middle class backgrounds.

### Social destinies of students

There is a general gradation of institutions within the higher education system itself. Not only is there the binary system which makes a distinction between the University-sector, and the other colleges, the art-schools, the Polytechnics and so on, but within these sectors there are also fine gradations between institutions, which are reflected in the social origins of the people they attract as students. These gradations also determine to a considerable extent the detail of the individual futures of students after they leave higher education, as obviously do the subjects which individuals study. But if we look at the picture as a whole, we can trace major general changes in the social prospects of students, which affect all but a small minority of the student population. The origins of students may largely determine the fact of their becoming students in the first place. But it is their possible destinies which more directly affect and explain their own activity and consciousness as students.

That this is so can partly be understood from the fact that once in the system of higher education, it appears that the working class children will do as well as, or sometimes marginally better than the child who has been pampered all the way through by a public school education. (22) So selected and groomed have they become, that the standard of their exam performance will lead to high achievement at the university level. Malleon at University College found evidence of an inverse relationship between father's occupational class and result of student exams. It seems that having crossed every hurdle in the way, the working class child at the University can start to compete on fairer grounds with the middle class. (23) Indeed, there is evidence to show that students from technical schools and grammar schools do significantly better once at the university than do the pupils from the public and direct grant schools. (24) This being so, it is not surprising that how they think of themselves, and how they act, becomes more closely related to their future than to their past. It is necessary, therefore, to examine what that future is likely to be: to consider how far it now tends to detach working-class students from their origins, or to drive them back towards them. And not simply the students of working class origins, of course: what is the future for the larger numbers of students of bourgeois and 'middle class' (professional, clerical) origins?



In the nineteenth century universities were almost wholly the preserves of the bourgeoisie itself and of the petty bourgeoisie deriving from it and closely related to it. Students who could not expect to be catapulted into the leading ranks of the ruling class were nevertheless assured of a comfortable niche in Church or Army or Public School - in any case securely removed from the exploited mass, and esconced in a milieu thoroughly permeated with the ruling ideology. Despite a role, in some countries, in the revolutionary progress of the bourgeoisie itself, the era of modern class struggle found students as a group ranged firmly against the rising working class. In Paris in June 1848, as Cliff and Birchall recall in their pamphlet on the recent French revolt (25) the students were ranged on the bourgeois side of the barricades. Likewise in Britain as late as the General Strike of 1926, when many students were active strike-breakers. In this period socialists regarded students as a group from whom individual recruits might, with difficulty, be made to the movement. They did not see the possibility of winning students across in large numbers, collectively. (26)

In this century, and with increasing speed since World War II, there has been a rapid expansion in the numbers of students (illustrated by our figures, given above, for Britain: but elsewhere the changes have been even more dramatic). This does not correspond to any rapid expansion of the ruling class: on the contrary, the concentration of capital, and with it effective social power and wealth, has increased, narrowing still further the numerical strength of the tiny minority which controls in capitalist society. What has happened is that, as our analysis of the changed functions of education in capitalism would suggest, more and more students are being trained for jobs as white-collar employees of the state and industry - not so much as future members of the ruling class or even, for the most part, as agents of the bosses with significant supervisory or directoral functions.

### Insecurity

A small minority of students are still destined for such functions. But apart from a tiny number of the sons of the great and powerful, there is little assurance for any student of such a future. Even an Oxbridge degree is no guarantee of entry to the bourgeoisie itself, in an age of monopoly capital. With that degree still not secured, there is increasingly little hope of performing any such entry. Of course it is still possible to inherit shareholdings, and even directorships; but to gain shareholdings by achieving a salary large enough with which to begin to build them up, formal higher educational qualifications are becoming increasingly necessary. Such qualifications may, as we have pointed out, be even more necessary to achieve entry to lower levels of occupations. So for the modern student, the first barrier to individual assimilation into bourgeois society is often the uncertainty about his capacity to achieve the qualifications at the end of the course he is undertaking. Apart from direct failure of exams, failure to complete the course means that a considerable proportion of students do not attain the qualifications. The consequence of such failure, especially for students from clerical and manual working-class homes who have lifted themselves out of their initial status and whose parents cannot afford to support them in further attempts to 'rise', is a crushing return to the office, if not to the factory.

But insecurity is fed as much by 'success' as by failure. Even a degree or a diploma does not today guarantee a particular kind

of future. And the occupations to which degree - or diploma - holders can aspire are not generally anywhere near the 'higher brackets' of society. Figures are available to indicate the first occupations of university graduates after completing their courses. A considerable minority continue to further study and research - to be distinguished from teacher-training. This in itself is a reflection of the uncertainty which besets even the successful student: his prospects on leaving university are no longer attractive, or even definite, so he prefers to postpone a decision. Another sizeable group proceeds to teacher training, or to training for law, social work, secretarial work, etc. Less than half obtain employment.

Percentage distribution of first-degree graduates between further education, training, and employment, 1965-66. (27)

	Men	Women	All
Further study	22.7	12.1	19.8
Teacher training	9.9	28.7	14.9
Other training	5.6	10.6	7.0
Employment	42.9	31.9	40.0
Others (incl. overseas students returning home, unknown, etc.)	18.9	16.7	18.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Among those that do obtain employment immediately, a majority of men go into industry and commerce, of women into public service and education.

Percentage distribution of first-degree graduates between main fields of employment, 1965-66. (28)

	Men	Women	All
Public service (excl. education)	11.5	26.8	14.8
Education	9.5	37.7	15.5
Industry and Commerce	72.3	27.3	62.7
Other	6.7	8.2	7.0

### Job prospects

Of those whose prospects are indicated by these figures, we can see that a large proportion go into education. At least half of women graduates in arts subjects, and a third of all others, go into education. (29) So do a good number of male graduates. Although some go into administrative roles, the vast majority go into teaching, mainly in schools. In either case, they become not very well-paid white-collar workers. They are wage-workers just as much as any docker is; they are entirely separated from real control, both in their own immediate occupation and in society at large. Even the minority which proceeds to higher degrees, and many of whom end up in lecturing posts, while they may achieve salaries of a slightly higher grade (although still lower than the wages of the most highly paid manual workers), suffer from job-insecurity at lower levels, and from the same powerlessness. Only a tiny proportion reach the privilege and position of the heads of departments in large universities.

The position of most of those who enter other forms of 'public service' is, in general, very similar. 'Administrative' jobs,



into which a very large proportion go, are different from directing roles, and do not necessarily lead to them. The work done is largely of a technical nature, with little part in effective decision-making (and none in determining the framework within which decisions are made). and the rewards are commensurately lower. Of course, in some branches of both national and local government service, the prospects for advancement are considerably greater than they are for teachers, and there may be a correspondingly greater attachment to the bureaucratic structure within which they hope to rise.

The same may be true of those (and they are a majority of those first-degree graduate men who take jobs) who enter industry or commerce. The majority of these are graduates in science and technology subjects, and the data provided by one recent study of scientists in industry is somewhat ambiguous on this point. Prandy (30) shows that getting on for half of scientists and engineers, with degrees or diplomas, working in industry are in research and development work. The remainder are largely in 'administrative' positions, but the majority of these are concerned with manufacture, operation, maintenance, installation, and design for manufacturer - fairly technical work. Only one-fifth or less are in non-technical roles, and only 10% become directors. This means that while there is a considerable prospect of rising to become a director, only a small minority do in fact make it. The prospect for the majority of graduates in science, engineering, etc., entering industry is that of largely technical work with no control over general direction even within the enterprise. The salaries, while higher than those in teaching do not compare with those of directors in industry; promotion is an uncertain and somewhat remote prospect.

While we should not minimise the possibility of rising to managerial and even executive positions which the graduate working in industry (or public service) does have, the fact remains that only a small minority of graduates do reach such levels, and that for most these are remote and uncertain if not impossible goals. And if this is true for university graduates (and the UGC figures refer only to these) it is even more true for those who undergo other forms of education. Trainee teachers, for example, can have no illusions about a destiny of great affluence and influence. The few really elite roles which are available are largely reserved for the university students - not for the graduates of polytechnics, colleges of technology, technical colleges, art colleges, and colleges of education. By and large the majority of these, like a large proportion of university students, can only expect to get fairly undistinguished white collar jobs. Of course in these jobs they may receive certain privileges (not always financial) compared to the rest of the industrial proletariat. But the increasingly determinant trend is forcing the mass of today's students into the working class when they leave university, or college.

They may not always be conscious of themselves as members of that class, and even trade unionism may be a slow and ambiguous development among some groups of them. Nor, when they are still in higher education, may they see themselves as future workers. But no longer can any but a tiny proportion of students see themselves as future rulers. Of course, this has been increasingly true for a very long period, and does not itself explain the student revolt. But the ties between the student and bourgeois society, in terms of the student's destiny in that society, have been especially strained in the expansion of higher education which has taken place since the last war. This straining of the object-

ive bonds has laid a basis, which combined with the changing nature of the university and the subjects taught in it has led, in the varying political crises of the different countries, to students' conflicts with their colleges and with society. It is to these conflicts, in which students subjectively repudiate their allegiance to existing society, that we now turn.

- (1) Morriss and Heady: Mortality in Relation to Father's Occupation 1911-50 The Lancet 12/3/54. There is nothing to suggest that the broad picture has changed since 1950.
- (11) Douglas: Unequal Opportunities at School. Higher Education Journal, Spring 1965
- (111) Bernstein: Social Class and Linguistic Development. A Theory of Social Learning. British Journal of Sociology June 1958
- (4) For further reading: see especially Bowlby Child Care and the Growth of Love. Penguin. The Plowden Report HMSO '67
- (5) JWB Douglas. The Home and The School. London 1964
- (6) Floud and Halsey: Social Class, Intelligence Tests and Selection For Secondary Schools (In Education, Economy and Society. Collier Macmillan '66)
- (7) Douglas, Journal of Higher Education. Spring '65
- (8) "Closing The-Gap" duplicated, Dept. Of Sociology, Manchester University 1967.
- (9) "Early Leaving" CACE 1954
- (10) These by Griffiths and Jones. Quoted by Dale in Soc. Review Monograph No. 7. '63
- (11) Dale - op cit.
- (12) Higher Education Journal. Spring '65
- (13) Extracted From Robbins Table 3, Chapter 3, and Macarthur, The Times 13/9/67.
- (14) Guardian 13/4/67
- (15) Education in 1966 - HMSO
- (16) Admissions - An Oxford View. Universities Quarterly. '65. M. G. Brock.
- (17) J.M. Ross "Where ?" '67.
- (18) The Public Schools - Socialist Education Association. '67
- (19) Admissions, Achievement and Social Class. Universities Quarterly. Dec. '63.
- (20) The Technological Universities - RA Buchanan. Universities Quarterly Dec. '63
- (21) Technologists In The Making. The Technologist. 1966.
- (22) Worswick, The Anatomy of Oxford, Times Ed. Supp. 3/5/57  
Evans, The Physiognomy of Cambridge, Times Ed. Supp. 16/10/59
- (23) Influence of Social Class on Student Performance at the University, Soc. Rev. Mono. No 7.
- (24) Brockington and Stein, Universities Quarterly Dec. '63
- (25) Tony Cliff and Ian Birchall France: the struggle goes on, London, International Socialism, 1968, pp. 10-11.
- (26) See the quotation from Trotsky, The Intelligentsia and Socialism (1910) in Cliff and Birchall, op. cit. p. 11n.



- (27) University Grants Committee, First Employment of University Graduates 1965-66, London HMSO 1967, Table B, p. 4.  
 (28) *ibid*, Table C, p. 9.  
 (29) *ibid*, Table E, p. 11.  
 (30) Prandy, K. Professional Employees, London 1965 pp 49-53.

## Chapter 4 The Conflict

The emergence of students as an important politically active force is a very recent phenomenon in advanced capitalist countries. Until three or four years ago those who debated the future of university industry and government were completely unworried by what happened on the campus. The discussion in the columns of elite journals, government committees and business dinners went on untroubled by the need to manipulate the student section of the population. Mass sit-ins, strikes and demonstrations did not hit the colleges until Berkeley in 1964,<sup>1</sup> Berlin in 1966-7,<sup>2</sup> Paris in 1968. In Britain, although the heyday of CND gave a foretaste of the future, mass activity among students dates from the LSE sit-in of March last year. Yet already the upsurge has imprinted its message upon the wider society. It has shaken the complacency of late capitalism. Together with the struggle of the Vietnamese, the ghetto uprisings in the US and above all the general strike in France it has brought to an end the "end of ideology" and confronted the "consensual society" with radical, socialist alternatives.

Yet the causes of this unrest, everywhere analysed, are nowhere explained. Sociologues have spoken of "intergenerational conflict"<sup>4</sup> (as if subsumed a phenomenon under a wider category explained it) and the frustrations of upwardly mobile students of working class origin<sup>5</sup> (although protesting students come from the whole range of social origins); others have emphasised lack of physical amenities (somehow a long walk to the lavatory makes one oppose the war in Vietnam) or the role of a few agitators in manipulating the mass student body<sup>6</sup> (perhaps this should be called the "Bolshevik as Hypnotist" thesis). So accustomed are they to manipulating people as objects, whether in the factory or the university, that the administrator of bourgeois education and their sociologue apologists never conceive it as possible that revolts against their rule are not produced by an alternative source of manipulation.

But neither has the left been particularly successful at coming to terms theoretically with the new student revolt. Its analyses has remained at the level of generalities that rarely guide meaningful action. Those that go further than this tend to proclaim students as "the new vanguard"<sup>7</sup> - ignoring the vast numbers of students still unmoved by the insurgency. Others merely repeat parrot fashion that students need to join up with workers - true but it says nothing about how to mobilise the students who are to-do this linking up.



The basic cause of the student upsurge is to be found in the one factor never focussed upon by the apologists of the status quo: the changing forms of manipulation required by the new capitalism. This is related to the changing function of the university (see Chapter 2) and the changing composition of the student population. It affects different sections of the student body differently. But associated with it are more general factors that affect all students. These are particularly important if a view of long term possibilities is to be obtained.

### The Failure of Reformism

No account of student militancy can ignore the wider failure of social democracy. The last five years have seen a general discrediting of attempts to overcome the evils of existing society by the gradual changing of the existing power structure. In the U.S. the 'New Frontier' and the 'Great Society' have progressively revealed its true nature, through from the Bay of Pigs to the Vietnam War and the Chicago convention. In Germany the 'Great Coalition' has left student militants and individual trade unions alone facing the threats of Emergency Laws and the present reality of police brutality and press monopoly. In Britain the role of the Labour government is too well known to bear repeating. The oppositional statue of the Communist Parties in France and Italy has meant that their reformists politics was not so automatically exposed by events - but their intensified search for national (i.e. bourgeois) respectability soon disenchanted first a small minority, then much larger numbers, of students when these themselves began to move.

The fruits of disillusion with reformist and permeationist politics are easily seen. In Germany it was after the SDP joined the government that its expelled student wing, the SDS gained its real strength; in less than 3 years the American SDS moved from a permeationist attitude to the Democratic Party, with the slogan 'Half the Way with LBJ', to all out opposition to capitalism; in Britain the halfhearted pacifism of the CND has been replaced by the massive militancy of VSC demonstrations.

The success and militancy of direct action in turn encourages more direct action. The failure of social democrats and liberals to fight for reformist or liberal demands is readily contrasted with the success of the NLF in Vietnam, at least among a minority of students. The action of these in turn offers possibilities of success to other sections of students. A success in California encourages a struggle in Berlin; one battle in London can produce a rash in a dozen other universities. The May events in France provided the climate in which struggles at Hull, Hornsey and Guildford could take place.

While the ritualised and jargonised ideologies of the past reveal their impotence, a new generation finds its feet through its own activity and its own example.

### The Student Experience

This leads us into the second underlying factor. Students are above all young. Nowhere else in capitalist society are young people separated off and pooled together in the same way. There are no factories containing only young workers. But late capitalism concentrates growing numbers of students into special institutions. This has many disadvantages for the long term development of a student movement - isolated from the mass of the

population it can easily be taken on by the authorities without receiving outside help, and it is incapable by itself of really damaging the ruling class through attacking their profits. It also lacks the tradition of sustaining struggle that some sections of workers have. But this lack of tradition also means lack of inhibition by outdated modes of struggle or by past defeats. Youth alone can confront late capitalism with the resources of unlimited imagination. It is not weighted down by the past. When young workers occasionally do struggle for their own ends (as in apprentices strikes) they too display some of this initiative and ability to learn quickly. Yet it is only in the colleges that these qualities are really concentrated. That is why students have been the first to respond without inhibition to the much wider disenchantment with past political forms.

These two factors, however, do not explain the recent student upsurge. They determine its form only. They do not locate the underlying sources of discontent and opposition to the status quo that students feel. To understand these it is necessary to look at the particular relations of different sections of the student body to capitalist society.

The student body can be broken down into three more or less distinct sections on the basis of their future role in capitalist society

Firstly there are the technologists (including in this physical scientists) These are being trained to play an integral part in the production process. In reality they will be nothing more than very highly skilled workers. Their labour will be productive and they will be employed because the value of what they produce will be higher than the value of their wages - in short because they will produce surplus value. In terms of their future role in the economy and their present conditions in the institutions of higher education (where, in general, they have to sign on for classes and lectures, have long fixed hours of work and are given little time or opportunity for a relaxed personal life, with high failure rates in the exams) they have much more in common with manual workers than any other section of students. Their eventual earning power will be relatively high - but no higher than for isolated groups of the working class (e.g. some Fleet Street printers). Yet at present the technologists are almost completely non-militant and reactionary in their attitudes.

Secondly there are what we will call the technocrats. These are destined for the middle levels of the bureaucracies of state and industry. Here they will implement the dictates of the ruling elite. They will deal with the administration of men rather than of things. They will be paid not because they produce surplus value, but because they help manipulate those who do, themselves willingly accept manipulation from above. Into this category fall management trainees, many students of business studies, some economists, lawyers, etc. Some of this group receive the same training as technologists (e.g. in engineering), others as ideologues (e.g. industrial sociologists and psychologists).

Thirdly there are the students of the 'humanities' and arts. These will play a role in propagating existing ideology and culture - as teachers (although these also include technologists), academics, journalists, etc. It is this section of students that has above all been involved in the recent upsurge of militancy. To see why we have first to look at the impact of the transition in the functions of higher education.



## The Crisis of the Transition

The history of capitalism is the history of the transformation of previously entrenched attitudes and interests under the impact of the developing needs of production. We attempted (in chapter two) to portray the elements of such a change in the field of higher education. It is implicit in our argument that it is the liberal conceptions of academic freedom and of disinterested scholarship that suffer in this process.

At one level 'academic freedom' was always an ideology - a simultaneous denial and defence of mundane interests. It defined one style of leisured activity for the ruling class and their immediate hangers-on. As the preserve of this elite it was not expected to extend any further. Those with political and economic power were part of the same group as those teaching or being taught in the universities. Academic autonomy was a device whereby one section of the elite was prevented from intruding upon the affairs of another. It was possible because there was 'no basic difference between the two sides involved'.<sup>10</sup>

But an ideology is never a question just of conscious deception or self-deception. It is accepted by whole strata who have no interest in doing so. 'The ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas'. It moulds the opinions and shapes the actions of all sorts of subordinate groups. It becomes an integral part of the total social process. Its jettisoning requires a more or less prolonged and protracted effort.

The old structure of higher education and its accompanying ideologies conditioned all sorts of other structures. It became the chief means by which the middle classes could transmit their status from generation to generation (see chapter 3). By the 1950's it conditioned the expectations of most of those who wanted to move up in society. It defined part of a hoped-for way of life. Above all it dominated the rest of the educational structure, as thousands of teachers preached its standards to their successful pupils. In this way the 'liberalism' of the older universities, with barely concealed disdain for the needs of industry and commerce, became an integral part of British intellectual life. As such it also became an integral part of the crisis of higher education in the late sixties.

At the top the radically changed function of the universities under late capitalism are readily accepted - particularly since Oxford and Cambridge will, as elite institutions, be hardly touched. Further down middle level academics, whether with the glee of the successful entrepreneur or with the resentment of the new entrant to the world of the work-ethic, acquiesce in order to preserve their privileges. At the base however the reaction is bound to be different.

A whole section of students is bewildered to find that what awaits them at the end of a long and arduous climb is not the kingdom of the mind they were promised. Increasingly what is demanded of them is not pure science and scholarship, free debate and critical thought, not an up to date and expanded version of the old university (it does not matter whether this actually existed or not - it is what the students are taught to expect), but participation in or apologetics for the world of money and militarism, poverty and police forces. Instead of being offered a chance to understand the world and society they themselves are subjected to a crude quantification; in place of an exploration of reality they get exams. Although their institutions may still be described as 'communities of scholars', the atmo-

sphere inside these comes to resemble more that of factories. In Hardy's novel Jude never fulfils his ambition of entering Christminster; had he done so certain disillusionment would have awaited him. Today entry is almost automatic; but for the non-member of the elite disenchantment remains. Those most eager to learn soon become those most alienated from the means of learning.

It makes little difference if the elite is chosen by birth or by criteria of 'merit', to varying extents arbitrary (eg in the art colleges), for the mass of students their position is to be low level functionaries in the capitalist order. As university education expands they no longer ever expect the old rewards in terms of money and prestige. A few, mostly from Oxbridge, might rise to be the high priests of bourgeois society; the majority can only look forward to being its clerks, with appropriately low salaries.

A variety of responses are open to the disenchanted student mass. They can drop out (not yet a major phenomenon in Britain), or attempt to find individual avenues of escape (for instance, drugs). They can go to the other extreme and compulsively identify with the system, seeing inability to succeed as an expression of their own failings not of the structure; ritualistic participation in the academic rat-race becomes an end in its own right. They can come to accept their position, trying to find enjoyment and self-expression in non-academic spheres (from coffee bar discussions to drinking sessions and student rags). But they can also rebel against the total structure of domination, articulating their particular grievances as part of a general view of capitalist society.

## The Erosion of Liberal Values

This last possibility completely changes the significance of the debate over the liberal values associated with the old notions of 'academic freedom' and a 'community of scholars'. For the structure the student finds increasingly oppressive to himself personally is simultaneously breaking with the values he has been brought up to accept. Paradoxically an ideology elaborated to defend the old interests of the high priests of the ruling class can become the mobilising cry of a new army of the dispossessed.

This disintegration of the old academic ideals is part and parcel of the general erosion of liberal values under state monopoly capitalism.\* The mutual interpenetration of the state and the monopolies makes the old mechanisms by which the bourgeoisie used control its own increasingly useless, and even dangerous, to it. Parliament, for instance, becomes only a minor weapon in big business' armoury of controls over the state. At the same time the growing centralisation of the ruling class increases the possibility of a coalescence of different sources of opposition to it. Because they might facilitate this process, 'democratic rights', 'freedom of speech' and so on begin to be seen as a dangerous luxury.

\* On the campus this erosion can take on forms as crude as elsewhere. We have referred above to increasing government and industrial control over the internal operation of the university. It is worth noting even more blatant forms of external control: e.g. direct police prying into the lives of students. Despite its prevalence this has not often been noticed. It did however lead to a student sit-in in Leeds earlier this year<sup>11</sup> after it was discovered that the hall porters had as part of their official duties to investigate people's political activities.



More than ten years ago a considerable public controversy broke out over the issue of spying on student activities. In May 1957 Lord Chorley revealed that M15 were collecting reports on the personal habits, reading habits and outside activities of students. "Some of the things I have heard", he told the House of Lords, "have really been almost unbelievable. A university teacher has been asked in effect what documents a colleague has in his room, which in fact means that a teacher has been asked to find a way into a colleague's study. This is not a thing that happens now and then: it is going on all the time. Numerous colleagues of mine who work in London University have told me in the past month that they have been asked to report not only on their students but on their own colleagues".

Lord Chorley's speech led others to make startling disclosures about the conduct of security service. Amid the hubbub a leading member of M15 admitted: "We have members reporting from every university and college in the British Isles".

This abandonment of liberal forms by the bourgeoisie carries inherent difficulties for them. For while "liberal" patterns of behaviour may be a residue from the past, liberalism as an ideology is still essential in legitimating their rule. While limiting freedom of speech to themselves they have to give the impression that their rule is the choice of millions of freely debating citizens; while restricting 99 per cent of academic work to their own physical or ideological needs they have to give the impression that the free pursuit of science justifies their rule; the more they pursue particular interests the more they have to appear to pursue general interests.

The contradictions involved in this attempt to maintain the forms of an ideology, while transforming the situation that gave it content and meaning, find their most extreme expression in that area of social life most deeply concerned with the elaboration and propagation of ideology: the sphere of higher education, and in particular the "humanities." In general there is bound to be a sharp clash between old academic definitions that are as often as not still used - both to justify the particular interests of teachers and professors and to cloak subordination to the needs of industrial research and vocational training - and the new functions. But usually the tensions that result are external to the subject matter of study - they concern the use of the discipline, not its inner structure. In those areas of study concerned with analysis and interpretation of social life itself, however, this ideological tension has to be part of the subject matter. The inability of the ruling class to openly and unambiguously define its own exploitative and manipulative role mean that the economist, sociologist or philosopher cannot do so either. For the academic this usually presents no problem. The attempt to reconcile unreconcilable contradictions can go on endlessly, giving rise to endless research papers and counter-papers, lecture and seminar topics, as well as the periodic rise of "new" and fashionable theories together with their propagators: in short it can be quite a profitable industry.

The mass of the students gain no such benefits. The whole operation appears as quite external to any interests they themselves might have. It only serves to increase their general alienation and bewilderment. At best it can seem like a complex sort of crossword puzzle, for which an aptitude will lead to postgraduate study and opportunities for relative leisure of academic life.

In Britain at least, there is one further factor that accentuates

alienation. There is a tendency for all those who have been at all critical of existing society in the pre-university or early university life to be pooled into certain departments - particularly sociology. Because sociology seems to be concerned with understanding society, it tends to attract those who feel that there are problems about society and life in it that need confronting. The "science of society" is seen as offering that disinterested debate that will enable solutions to social problems to be approached.

Once in the university they find that the reality is quite different. Far from coming to terms with social problems, they at best merely measure them, at worst are asked to join in a long winded and jargonised commentary on the status quo that offers no possibilities of meaningful action to change it. Confronted with the reigned and ritualised "analyses" of the sociologue two possibilities are open to the student. The first is himself to accept what he is taught as "science", to limit his own aspirations within the bounds it prescribes, and to try to participate in its alienated discourse. This was until recently the rule. Those who became students as opponents of nuclear weapons ended up as fellows of "peace research", those who had supported trade unionism would become lecturers in industrial relations, those who had liked Marx would pontificate endlessly on "theories of social change". More recently, however, it is precisely this group of students that has begun to choose the opposite option - to rebel completely against the system.

### The Dynamics of the Student Struggle

The university (or College of Technology or Art School or training college) is a structure of permanent repression. It has to both transmit the whole heritage of human culture, but do so in such a way as to ensure that it will be used in ways that are useful and safe for the ruling class. Increasingly too it has to transmit it to a social stratum which will itself never be part of the ruling class. It has to simultaneously stimulate the development of ideas and restrict their free play.

From this flow all the irksome restrictions that confront students: the arbitrary power of the principles, or vice-Chancellors the refusal to consider effective student control, the irrational examinations system, in short, the crude authoritarianism, as also the arbitrary division of subject matter (in the "social sciences") and the universally accepted limitation on areas of debate. In some cases these features are starkly exposed, in others they are hidden under a veil of paternalistic "tolerance". But nowhere are they absent in the universities of modern capitalism. The increased integration of the university with industry and the state make them more than ever necessary, even if it makes cloaking of them also more necessary (for instance beneath structures of "participation").

But a considerable proportion of the students have been educated in an ideology that stresses a non-authoritarian view of higher education, and speaks of the "community of scholars" as an end in itself. These will only accept the authority structure of the university as long as it can maintain a liberal pretence. So long as it can do this they will readily accept it, believing it to work in their own (or society's) interests. They will accept its pose of being insulated from the more unpleasant features of the wider society and of operating in the interests of science or the nation.



This "stability" is only possible for the structure as long as no-one seriously questions its purpose or its working.

"Student political rebellion tends to break out when a series of events which violate the liberal bureaucracy's norms set off shocks among those students who have not yet been sufficiently assimilated into the corporative system. The university administration is the *de facto* ruler of academia. It not only has the power to move against student dissidents; it is also often able to use the weapon of time to its advantage. It can forbid, harass, abolish, and destroy student institutions and activities; and it can do so just prior to the final exam when students are away from the campus during the summer recess or between semesters. Never the less the administrators are sometimes forced to drop their liberal facade. When their informal mechanisms of control give way to vulgar manipulation and repression a critical stage is reached. Expansion along these lines by university elites moves students to act to protect their rights."

This analysis admirably describes the development of many student struggles. Based upon what happened at Berkeley in 1964 it could equally well be applied to LSE in 1967, Essex in 1968 or the beginnings of the May explosion in France.<sup>14</sup> In each of these cases relatively small groups of students acted in ways which accorded with the liberal pretensions of the university structure but were clearly opposed to its manipulative ends. When the elite reacted in accordance with the latter, the mass of the rest of the students (at least of the humanities and to another smaller extent of the pure sciences) who accepted the liberal ideology supported the minority against the authorities.

In this situation all the tensions within the university between past and present, between ideology and reality find their expression through the student body. The minority (chiefly in the "social sciences", but not wholly so) who came to university looking for answers to social questions, and receive instead the commonplace prejudices of the bourgeoisie rewritten in a more pretentious language, find that when they ask these same questions about the university structure itself through their actions they receive much more realistic and immediate answers, albeit crude and brutal ones. This in turn forces other students to begin to raise the same questions.

In Berkeley the initial confrontation in 1964 began with the authorities acquiescing to the outside interests established in the power structure of the university, by trying to stop recruitment for outside political activities. At LSE it began when a section of the student body protested against the appointment of a new Director for the School who had previously acquiesced to demands by the racist Smith regime in Rhodesia. At Essex it was similarly a demonstration against the involvement of the university in illiberal outside practices - in this case a scientist, Dr Inch, working on germ warfare, giving a lecture - that produced the first demonstration.<sup>15</sup>

### The Minority and the Mass

In all cases the reaction of the authorities to this minority of students (who for shorthand we will refer to as "ideologues" - in the sense that they tend both to already have some ideological - although not necessarily socialist - commitment and to be students of ideological disciplines) is to resort to the crudest

forms of direct repression. Either they bring the police onto the campus or they suspend the "ring leaders". At this point the broad mass of the student body is brought into action. They begin to see that the university is not the pretended "community of scholars". They react with outrage to the betrayal of the ideals which the university - dominated educational system itself has taught them. They also begin to grope for alternatives to the present structure. An intense debate begins about the relation of the real university to the ideal, about possible changes in the former, about the role of the student in the university and in society. For some at least of the previously non-ideologically committed students the outcome is a complete re-definition of their position in revolutionary terms.

But not all student movements have developed through this dialectic of student "provocation" and administration repression. More recently mass sit-ins and strikes have taken place for positive student demands about the running of the colleges. The basics of the process are not however really different. The demands still accord with the ostensible ideals of the university; they are pushed by the relatively small proportion of students who already feel uneasy about the wider society and its relationship to the university; they are accepted by the majority of the "liberal" students; (chiefly with humanities) they are rejected out of hand by the authorities. The struggles in the summer term of 1968 at Hull University and also at Hornsey College of Art seem to have developed in this way.

It is important to note a certain ambiguity in these struggles. The demands of the movement change as it grows. The initial motivation seems to have little relation to the final outcome. At Hull the first sit-in of a few hours resulted both from a political identification with the French struggle and a general dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the university that was not yet formulated into any program. This comes into being after the struggle has begun. At Hornsey the sequence is similar, although in this case there is an initial program, but it concerns issues of no real concern to the mass of students (the financing of the students union and the question of a sabbatical year for the president). The mass of students accept the justice of these demands, and support them, but only in a very passive manner. Once, however, they are gathered together to push for them, they feel their own strength and begin to formulate demands intimately related to their own life situation (content of courses etc).

This ambiguity can only be understood by understanding the differing motivations of different groups of students. Those who begin the struggles tend to be those who are already radically discontented with the status quo. These were the ones who came to the university looking for something they were promised but will never find there.

They respond to the struggle with little regard to the issues. The confrontation with the authorities offers them the opportunity to explore the world, to take hold of reality in theory and practice, which the authorities themselves deny them. They support the struggle because they learn through it, just as they oppose the authorities because they cannot learn from them. It is almost as if they want to "sit-in" and are looking for an excuse.

But for the struggle to expand and be successful it has to respond not just to the intense ideological alienation of this first



group, but to the more broadly based alienation of the mass of students. It has to formulate programs that appeal to these. Because the most easily mobilisable body of students are those (chiefly in the 'humanities') who accept liberal definitions of reality, it is within the liberal rhetoric that such demands tend to be phrased.

### 'Representation' and 'Student Power'

We have argued throughout that the university has an equivocal relationship to liberalism. It has to define itself in liberal terms, but its practice can no longer be fully assimilated within them. Above all its internal mechanisms of repression and its external commitment to a system of oppression belie them.

While students are engaged in defensive battles for elementary rights they are aided by this ambiguity. For in fighting victimisation, for instance, they can see themselves as fighting liberal battles. The authorities have departed from the prevailing ideology, not them. The same can apply in struggles against elements of racism (as at LSE or Enfield) against participation in war efforts (Sussex and Essex) or against police snooping (Leeds).

Difficulties arise, however, as soon as students begin to move from defensive to positive demands. And this movement is inevitable once power begins to be exercised by the student body - for every section of this has previously unarticulated grievances of its own. The temptation is to couch these in a liberal rhetoric so as to make support for them by the students and acceptance by the university easier. But nothing is easier than for the authorities to accept the rhetoric, perhaps make marginal changes, but leave their underlying discontents of the students untouched.

The most popular, the most ambiguous, and the most dangerous of such liberal formulations is that of 'representation'. It has come to the fore in struggle after struggle. It has seemed to challenge the status quo. It has unified the student body as no other slogan has. And at the end of the day it has left this same body divided, demoralised and even defeated. For its strength - that it appeals to quite diverse sections - is also its weakness: it defines the essential aspirations of none. That is why it can also be accepted, both by the most reactionary students and the most far sighted of administrations.

Like the similar cry of 'workers participation in industry' it is essentially meaningless. With only 49% membership of ruling bodies the workers or students can be always outvoted - and will be as soon as they challenge the system. Those that elect the representatives come to understand this lack of power, begin to feel the whole operation has no point; their failure to bother to vote for representatives is then defined as 'apathy' and taken to prove that they are incapable of exercising power. (In fact what is offered is always much less than even 49% of membership.)

This danger, which leads to containment of the movement for change and a feeling of defeat for its participants, can only be overcome by constant criticism of the demand for representation, while drawing out from it those elements that really appeal to students and articulating them in a new form. Strategies for developing real student control, both over particular areas and over the whole of higher education, have to be elaborated - we

make attempts at this in our last chapter.

The demand for representation has moved large numbers of students. It has done so because it seems to all those wanting some sort of change in the status quo to challenge it, at the same time being acceptable to others who accept the liberal ideology while being generally contented. But it does not either offer the students any real change or compel the authorities to reveal their true nature. Nor does it force the students to begin to explore the sources of their own discontent. Acceptance of the slogan tends to be passive. And when the demand is granted students cannot help feeling that either they have been conned into struggling or that they have been sold out by their leaders. In a sense the slogan provides a bridge between the minority of students who are radically alienated and the larger numbers who are not so immediately aware of their discontent - but a phoney one, the shortcomings of which are soon exposed.

### 'Moderates' and 'Extremists'

In the process of struggling the student body itself is transformed. For the first time people find themselves shaping reality rather than being mechanically moulded by it. The alienation from learning and debate that characterises most students is replaced by an unprecedented desire and ability to learn. They reach inside themselves as if to draw out unnoticed qualities. The previous atomisation is replaced by a new feeling of purposeful self-activity. What so many of the students had wanted from education and found lacking - creativity, imagination, purpose, knowledge - is suddenly found in the struggle against the institutions of education. 'The lessons of thirty years are learnt in one day'.

But within the new situation old forces continue to operate. Those who argue for lifelong habits of deference and subservience are pushed aside in the initial enthusiasm of the struggle, but as it proceeds they still bring their weight to bear. Within the apparently spontaneous movement are a multitude of debates between advocates of opposing world views. In these the variety of contradictory opinions students hold about themselves, their work and the world are brought out. On the one side the prevailing liberal ideology, hesitations about finally breaking with it, fear of being out on a limb, deferential faith in Vice-Chancellors and professors. On the other a willingness to completely reject the status quo, to see in the developing movement its own justification, a preparedness to reshape reality, and to develop new theories to accomplish this.

This split between the 'moderates' and the 'extremists', as well as the numerous equivocating individuals in between, is an integral part of the movement. It cannot be wished away. It is particularly dangerous to try and hide it beneath ambiguous slogans (such as 'representation') or to try and prevent the debate in the name of the 'unity' of the student body. The clear argument between alternative world views is a prerequisite of a clear understanding of the possibility of struggle.

But there is the danger that this argument will be prevented from taking place by the established position of strength of one of the participants. Even at the height of the struggle there is danger of manipulative politics - or rather manipulative politics can be used to prevent the struggle reaching these heights. For one factor in the consciousness of the students is the established form of organisation of the student body, the old student



union. Wherever this has played a role in the student struggle it has acted as a dead-weight on its further development.

To understand why it is not enough to just talk about the politics of the personnel of the union bureaucracy. Whether these are well meaning leftists or traditional rightists they tend to have very similar reactions in the struggle itself (although a minority might go over to the students). What is at stake is the nature of student union politics itself and those who hold office through these in the period prior to struggle.

The central fact here is that student unions always operate on the basis of the 'apathy' of the majority of the students. (which itself is a product of the lack of power of the unions). Even where there are regular general meetings, these rarely discuss issues considered important by the majority. They tend to become the preserve of a minority obsessed with these matters, either because of their own political ambitions or because they are genuinely well meaning. In either case their whole attitude is conditioned by the conception that it is up to them to act for the majority, not for the majority to act for itself. Even when members of the hard left take over such positions they are subjected to the same forces. They may try to pass left wing resolutions - but not by involving the whole student body but rather by relying on its apathy. They are constantly balancing between their own minority of supporters and what they conceive of as a reactionary mass. Rather than struggling to make the latter self-reliant they attempt to keep it dependent upon themselves.

These attitudes persist even in the middle of struggle. Although the union bureaucracy might ostensibly support the students aims (particularly if these imply representation for themselves) and even play a role in initially formulating these, they always tend to try and limit the struggle, to try and keep it within old forms. Even unconsciously they can wreck mass meetings through their knowledge of union constitution dating from a previous era.

The feeling among militant students at these tactics is a hatred of individuals and a wish that others had been elected. But the retarding role of old structures in a new situation is not a result of the actions of any one individual, but of the uneven consciousness of the majority. The job of militants should not be to complain about individuals alone, but to fight for a representative organ of the student body, directly accountable to it and subject to instant recall.

Related to this is the need to prevent anyone engaging in secret negotiations with the authorities. Not only does this let the authorities know the depths of divisions within the student ranks without committing themselves in public, it also leads to individuals gathering status for themselves through their 'special role' with the authorities. These then can demoralise the mass of students by giving them advice about the administration's intentions that have no substantial basis. (This happened at both Hull<sup>16</sup> and LSE).

### The Staff

One other group usually emerges alongside the old bureaucracy and tries to use previous attitudes of deference to contain the movement. This is the academic staff. The number of these who

will actively solidarise with the students is usually very small. The interests of large numbers of the rest are not identical with those of the administration. The transition from traditional academicism to functional integration into modern capitalism threatens established patterns of academic life. The accompanying erosion of liberal values may even be resisted to differing degrees. But the mass of academics never become a completely dispossessed group as a result of these changes. Some of them even benefit - those prepared to argue for the erosion of values in order to advance their own career prospects: the educational entrepreneurs, the paid apologists of outside interests (e.g. professors of 'industrial relations'). And even if the majority of academics are in no way part of the ruling elite, they are completely unable to resist its demands. For their underlying motivation - that of the 'academic career' - is one that continually destructures them as a group. Promotion for individuals is the natural course of events. This implies not only (or often even) academic excellence but also getting on with those who do the promoting. In this way even the lowest academic is vertically integrated by his expectations into the ruling class structures at the apex of university government. Related to this is the ability of the authorities always to put on pressure by taking a negative attitude to requests for promotion - a reaction that can never be proved to be based on political considerations. Finally, the majority of academics are likely to see their own career prospects, their standing in the profession, as tied up with the standing of the institution. They fear student rebellion as likely to detract from this.

The chief concern of academics is then to try and contain and limit any student unrest. They resent it as a source of disturbance to their own symbiosis with the ruling values. Their natural reaction is to side with the powers that be. The only instances of any sort of counter-tendency to this seem to have been in the art colleges.

But if the students are militant and insistent, some sections of the staff will begin to equivocate. They still accept the fundamentals of the ruling attitudes. They certainly do not support the students. But they see any intransigence on the part of the authorities as itself becoming dangerous to their own stable situation. This group is likely to begin to appear before the students 'in the interests of the academic community', to suggest compromise solutions, which do not, however, concede anything real to the students. A notable instance of this occurred during the LSE struggle when a group of about 60 teachers took upon a mediating role - while denying any possibility of a victory for the students (although this was later achieved without the 'help' of this group).

This should not be taken as implying that academics necessarily display bad faith (although they often do). Rather it is their class position, as an intermediate group, not fully without privileges and power, that prevents them being able to decisively oppose the authorities in the manner of the students. Even the most left wing of teachers is likely to succumb to the pressures of possible victimisation.

All this would be of little importance were it not the case that whole sections of students continue to defer to the staff. They look to them for a leadership they could not give even if they wanted to. It is precisely at the moments when the students are most under pressure, are most uncertain of themselves, that individuals or groups of them (often associated with the old union



bureaucracy) emerge with 'compromises' endorsed by members of the staff. If this is not resisted it can only lead to a vicious circle of demoralisation and further deferential dependence. The self-reliance and creativity of the students is undermined. Even if the struggle continues, the old authoritarian teaching relations can find their reflection within its structures. To at least one outside observer this seemed to be the case at some stages in the Hornsey struggle.

### Outcomes

In countering the power of the authorities student movements have often been extremely successful. They have forced concessions where none were thought possible. They have demonstrated the impotence of the strongest of structures of repression when confronted with mass opposition.

But victories have so far been limited to certain areas of struggle. Defensive battles, such as the defence of victimised representatives, have been won. Offensives against the entrenched power structure have been much less successful. They have produced marginal (although still worthwhile) gains for the students, but have left major features unchanged. 'Representation' may be gained, but never control.

Rosa Luxemburg used to refer to the trade union struggle as the 'labour of Sisyphus': necessary if the situation of the workers was not continually to deteriorate and if they were not to be completely helpless before the arbitrary power of the ruling class, but unable ever to change the balance of forces so as to permit relief from the grinding necessities of further struggle. Much the same can be said of the student struggle. It permits temporary inroads into the dominating structures, it may produce marginal changes so as to make life less irksome to the individual student, but it cannot in itself do away with the structures for good. That is why even after considerable successes there tends to be a certain defeatist atmosphere. What are the concessions wrung from the authorities compared with their seemingly complete overthrow at the height of confrontation?

These problems are aggravated by the differing situation of students compared with that of workers. Even in a purely wage struggle workers are grappling with the central process of capitalism, the pumping out of surplus value. For students, so far at least these areas where reforms have been won are not those that are most intimately related to their particular forms of oppression. They may change the conditions in which they are taught, but they do not alter the content of their courses. This particularly affects those students whose initial militancy is very much connected with their alienation from courses of study they feel to be irrelevant (eg sociologists). At the height of the confrontation they begin to experience and articulate a radically new and more valuable forms of knowledge. This can only make the eventual return to academic irrelevencies more disheartening.

But the real rewards of struggle cannot be measured by any crude weighing up of gains and losses. They lie elsewhere, in the more longterm damage done to the authoritarianism of the educational system together with the wider social interests this reflects, and in the self-change of the student body.

It is control over the rest of society that gives the ruling class the resources that enable it to contain and wear down student revolts. But this control is above all ideological. Physical

force can be effective against minorities, but not against a confident and conscious disaffected majority. But even in defeat the student movement plays a part precisely in undermining this total ideological control. Its efficacy here will vary with its circumstances (eg compare the undreamed-of success of the French students in May 1968 of igniting a general strike, with the continued insulation of just as bitter battles in Japan over a period of eight years or Germany for two). Nowhere are the universities the only, or even the chief, source of the ruling ideas. But with students in ferment the authorities will find it that much more difficult to propagate such ideologies.

Such affects are closely related to those operating on the students themselves. Through changing reality and stripping the ruling elite of its ideological cloak (however transitorily), students can begin to grasp the sources of their own alienation. They cease to blame themselves for failing to come to terms with the world through the fragmented and reified concerns of the official arts and 'social sciences', or for being unable to bear the exaggerated work loads of the physical sciences and technology.

### Practical and theoretical opposition

The long term consequences of such transformation will vary from student to student. Some will radically change their world-view. For these the natural outcome is a revolutionary socialist commitment. Hence, for example, in the US and Germany the development of the student movement has also been the development of a new socialist movement. With many of the other students the changes might not be so explicit. They are necessarily much more difficult to detect. They are quantitative rather than qualitative, perhaps preparing for a future commitment rather than a present one. Here the contradictions of 'commonsense' consciousness - made up as it is of elements from the various opposed world-views the individual comes into contact with during his lifetime, are accentuated, not resolved.

Such developments are not extraneous to the student struggle. Changes in consciousness are not merely a result of the confrontation; they are also intimately related to its basic cause: the attempt of the ruling class to appropriate the student's mind. If he develops a critical, revolutionary (and therefore marxist) consciousness, the student begins to reappropriate his own mind. He may not be able to overthrow the objective basis of his alienation (ruling class control of higher education), but he can contest this and in doing so overcome its subjective manifestations. This may not be a once and for all change (the pressures to succumb to the system continuing to exist), but it can occur.

The attempt to carry the area of conflict into the centre of the ideological field has been characteristic of many more recent student struggles. In Germany there has been the critical university, in Berkeley the demand for courses run by Black Panther speakers, in Britain the 'free universities', in Paris the 'summer university'.

The fact that many such attempts have proved abortive, should not be taken as an argument against them. It is merely evidence that the ruling class has more resources than the students in the long run. While it controls both funds and exam-syllabuses, voluntary courses are likely to be peripheral for many students. That is why it is utopian to see, as many 'moderates' do, such parallel institutions as a substitute for struggle. But if conceived of as part of a continual critique of the ruling ideas that is



also carried into the official lecture room they can have a central significance. After a particular mass confrontation has been contained by the authorities, large numbers of students (although probably a minority) can complete their practical opposition to the status quo with a theoretical one. The natural outcome of this must be both renewed practical confrontation within the university and a joining together with those forces opposed to the ruling class outside the university. In particular, students must join with that working-class opposition that can develop into the only force capable of destroying capitalist power.

#### footnotes

1. cf Hal Draper 'Berkeley the New Student Revolt' New York '65
2. cf Manfred Buddeberg in International Socialism 33.
3. With a very few exceptions the best analysis we have found has been 'Populist Students and Corporative Society' by Harold Jacobs and James Petras, in ISJ February 1967, although we disagree with certain aspects of its analysis of the wider society.
4. Percy Cohan, in a talk to LSE students, March 1967.
5. David Martin in The Listener 1968
6. cf the Professor of Industrial Relations who blamed 'anarchists, Trotskyists and admirers of the Dutch provos' for the 1967 LSE sit-in (quoted in 'LSE: What it is and how we fought it', p 24.
7. cf Black Dwarf no. 3.
8. For instance, Students were the most ready source of scabs in at least one recent dispute (Injection Mouldings at Queensbury).
9. For a discussion on the relation between 'academic freedom' and different university and social structures (although not a fully clear one) see Ben-David and R. Callins 'Student Politics' (New York, 1967).
10. ibid p 163
11. For facts see University News, Leeds University students Union newspaper, 28/6/68. Quoted in unpublished manuscript by Ray Challiner.
12. Tribune 31/5/57. Referred to in Challiner op cit.
13. Jacobs and Petras, op cit.
15. cf 'Trouble in the Valley' Solidarity, vol 5 no. 4
16. See Tom Fawthrop in NLR 50.
14. cf analyses of French events in issues of French students paper Action, August 1968.

#### Chapter 5 Programme and Organisation

The new student movement in this country is less than eighteen months old. It has moved a long way in a short time. But it still affects only odd islands in the total structure of higher education. It has been restricted to certain institutions, and within these to certain sections of students. Yet the repressive features of modern capitalism permeate all institutions, and all sections of the student population (except the small elite) face a future of exploitation (whether physical or mental). The possibilities of growth for the new movement are immense. But these will not be realised without conscious effort.

The administrations of the universities possess a local and a national organisation built up through years of tradition and accepted power. It has not, up to this year, been an actively fighting machine, nor was it ever designed to be one. Over the years it has passively and overbearingly subjected students to its 'unquestionable authority'. Only in the last twelve months has it found it necessary to review its structure and powers in the light of current student 'unrest'. When the Vice-Chancellors met at Cambridge last June they were undoubtedly conscious of the fact that they were strengthening their national cohesion to an even greater degree - a task that the students have not yet thoroughly undertaken. From this meeting has developed the closer relationship between the Vice-chancellors and the N.U.S. which has now (October 1968) produced a joint offensive against the militant student movement.

On the local scale Administration organisation is strong because it is entrenched. This is because:-  
 -It is on the campus all the year  
 -It is on the campus for many years, before and after each generation of students.  
 -It is the existing authority and therefore commands and wins respect from the majority of each new year of students  
 -It can form prestige relationships that contribute substantially to the power it wields. The staff cling onto the facilities and benefits of academic life; the students unfortunately see these as something to aspire to rather than something to break down.

From this position of strength the authorities in each university are able to employ certain tactics which can, and which have, defeated student movements on the campus. These include playing one section of the students off against another (eg granting concessions that split 'moderates' from 'militants'); appeal-



ing for co-operation with the university on bureaucracy ("I think you will agree that your President of Union is in a good position to be in full possession of the facts."); attacking the political nature, if any (and if not, inventing one!) of the leadership of the campaign; making attacks on staff who support students, usually in the form of veiled threats as regards advancement of academic career; playing for time in the face of students demands, hoping that heavy work programs will force students back into privatisation and apathy; finally, using the ultimate weapons of suspending or expelling students, or threatening to have their grants withdrawn.

In the coming year the Vice-Chancellors, perhaps as a result of their Cambridge Conference, will certainly employ the weapon of "Allowing students to participate in maintaining University discipline". Students will be co-opted onto Disciplinary Committees when the need for harsh measures arises. This co-option could be part of the "student-participation-in-government" offer made by administrations, thus creating a division within the student body, and forcing a section to accept and help implement the University regulations **against** their fellow-students. As with workers' participation in management it means that the inmates of institution have no choice but to accept the assumptions upon which the legitimacy of that institution is based.

If there is not clarity and determination within the ranks of the students these sort of measures can be effective. Strikes and sit-ins can be called off without real concessions being offered (as at Leicester and Aston in 1967-68), spreading despondency about the efficacy of future student action. In extreme cases the result can be a massive defeat for the students, with victimisation on a large scale. The actions of protest have to have a strong basis of support within the student body. This requires elaboration of programs of action that really correspond to the interests of the students, without obscuring them behind rhetoric

#### Points for a Student Programme

1. The most elementary demands that can be made concern the abolition of authoritarian procedures **outside** the academic life of the institution. Because of a variety of factors (particular historical backgrounds, subject matter of course), the form of authoritarianism varies greatly from institution to institution. There are enormous contrasts in the extent to which the elite feels it is necessary to enforce obedience to ruling values outside the class room, as well as inside it.

The most blatant examples of authoritarian control over students' private lives are expressed in the doctrine of "in loco parentis". Where this is accepted the university administration takes over the legal powers of parents over students of under twenty one. The general hold of this is declining, but it is still particularly important in particular institutions - for instance, in the Colleges of Education and in university halls of residence (e.g. regulations forbidding visits by men to girls rooms after certain hours). In some institutions control is also exercised over where students can live (in at least one northern university, couples have been forbidden to live together).

Such practice might seem marginal (even if inconvenient). They have in fact, however, been part and parcel of the general authoritarianism of the educational system. Restrictions have been so strong in, say, female training colleges because living a healthy sex life has not been considered the "right sort of thing" for

a woman who is going to teach children. The lives of one generation have to be curtailed in order to safeguard the ideas of the next.

2. A second set of demands follow naturally from the first. These concern control from above over activities carried on on campus but not related to courses. Again there is considerable variation from institution to institution. In some the powers of the students union or its ability to spend its own income are curtailed. In others there is no right for political societies to exist, or if they do they are denied rights that other societies have. Or again, in most institutions the administration reserves for itself the right to allocate rooms not being used for academic purposes, not leaving them available for student activities. Even the most trivial restrictions presuppose that students are objects to be subordinated to more important interests (as in one North London College of Technology where students were forbidden to smoke in certain rooms because they had been redecorated so as to permit visits from "local industrialists").

Such restrictions should be openly defied wherever they exist, and the authorities forced to try and defend them in front of the whole student body. They cannot be reconciled even with the prevailing myth of the "community of scholars."

3. The next set of demands that must be made concern the way in which the student is treated in his course. For students of technology the problems of a built-in high failure rate (constant even if the average level of exam performance rises), of compulsory lectures and classes, of overwork and of bad facilities arise. More generally, there is the lack of control by students over the designing of the structure of courses, and above all over examinations.

At this level we are beginning to approach the central problem of control over institutions of higher education. For students of science and technology the external control results in conditions approaching in many ways those of the factory worker: long hours, a truncated social life (aggravated by the sexual imbalance characteristic of most technology departments), restriction on creativity because of the need to accord with the measuring apparatuses (i.e. exams) of the bourgeoisie. The crucial difference with the worker is that there is no tendency for a permanent collective opposition to the demands of the system to arise. The orientation of all study round the exam rat-race continually atomises the students. The nature and intensity of their work give them neither the time nor the incentives to question the structures that oppress them. In contrast, students of the humanities have a much more leisured life. Exams are important for them not simply because they lead to over-work and worry (although they often do) but because they effectively bind the student to the issues and debates considered important by the powers that be.

The question of exams is central to all the control mechanisms in higher education. It is through them that the organisation of status in capitalist society is transmitted from generation to generation. They play a part (although a small one) in the selection of the elite and legitimise its rule. They are in addition the ultimate source of control over the behaviour of the students, and the determinants of teaching methods and contents. For students to challenge the exam system is both to place their own future at stake in the most radical fashion (which is why boycotts of exams are so difficult to arrange short of a semi-



revolutionary situation) and to confront the system at the point where it is unlikely to make real concessions. The most it is likely to be willing to concede is a change in the form of examinations - for instance from a once-and-for-all examination to a system based upon periodic assessments.

For these reasons demands have to be raised around the question of exams, but in a very clear and precise manner. There is a danger of just objecting to particularly nasty aspects of the present system without even beginning to remove more general evils. Thus a continuous assessment system does away with the psychological strains associated with a hurried finals exam at the end of three years, only to spread the worry and anxiety over the period. If anything, it is likely to increase the dominance of exams over study, not vica-versa. There are, however, genuinely radical demands to be made. These are reforms that the mass of students will accept but which really confront the quantification process. For instance there should be an end to the practice of raising pass levels year by year and also of altering pass levels to have similar percentages of each grade regardless of performance.

Such demands only begin to scratch at the exam system. They do not touch its central features. They can even aid these by making the system more efficient. It is also possible, however, by attacking apparent absurdities to put under question the total absurdity of measuring living men against one another on a crude scale as if they were inanimate objects. From the struggle for limited reforms to ease the toll of intellectual exploitation, there can be a move towards questioning the general treatment of students as commodities being prepared for the market.

#### Who controls?

4. Students do, and should, go beyond protesting at the form or structure of the educational process to issues concerning its functioning. Protests at involvement of the university in military work are the commonest of these so far, but there is considerable room for extension of this sort of protest. For instance the growing integration of the universities with the profit making activities of big business is not in itself a particularly easy issue to organise around. In most universities in Britain the mediating links between the top and bottom are still complex enough to conceal the real influence of capitalist interests. But this situation is often transformed as soon as a considerable number of students begin to raise other issues. Then the real power of outside interests on the Court of Governors is likely to be seen to be decisive in determining the attitude taken to the protesters. (as for instance at LSE where the "appeals tribunal" that confirmed the suspension of two students was presided over by a director of 35 companies). The natural reaction of these interests is to treat students like children (or, more accurately, like the workers in the other concerns they run).

At this point the call for the removal of non-educational interests from the government of the college can become more than a piece of rhetoric aimed at making propaganda; it is transformed into the sort of agitational slogan that thousands of students could respond to. The central question of control over higher education is raised.

5. The final, and in many ways the most important, area in which the system should be contested is over the content of courses

themselves, and the related issue of control of appointments. Here both the purposes for which the student is to learn and the relationship of the university to the outside world are at stake. That is why it is over precisely these issues that the university authorities will be most reluctant to yield. A whole battery of arguments will be brought to bear to weaken student determination. Over appointments in particular it will be argued that students are "not qualified" to judge the calibre of teachers - although this argument is never used when the judges are business men or senile academics. What is really feared is that ritualised academic routines and careful adjustments to the "national needs" (ie of capitalist society) will be jeopardised by eager questioning from those who do not benefit from them.

Because students are so often as not instinctively deferential to established authority, these demands are not easily put. But if properly related to the concrete situation they can become the basis for action. For instance, in sociology departments it should be possible to argue that the "science of society" should include as a substantial part of its syllabus debate over major issues confronting society - like Vietnam, imperialism, racism, unemployment, fascism - and that in this debate all major viewpoints the students want to hear should be equally represented and be permitted equal facilities. This will not persuade the authorities. But it will convince the mass of students. Not only does it accord with the prevailing liberal ideology (even while exposing its limitations) but it also confronts what we analysed above (in chapter 4) as the basic course of the alienation of these students. Further, given the mass student action there is the possibility of making some limited encroachments on the ideological power of the ruling class. At the same time, the independent development of revolutionary education and theory (the "free university" integrated with struggle - without illusions) is a necessary activity.

We have arranged our five types of demands in some sort of order, moving up from those relatively marginal to the system to those that are much more fundamental. But this analysis should not be too rigidly interpreted. Authoritarian structures are not made up of disparate and unrelated elements. In the course of their development the mechanisms governing the various areas in which control is exercised influence and sustain one another, so as to give rise to a more or less integrated structure. Habits of obedience inculcated in one area (even if the rules that have to be obeyed produce no material benefit for anybody) spread over into other areas. Similarly success for students in undermining one element in the authoritarian structure can make them resist others.

#### The Functions of these demands in practice

In practice student struggles raise demands covering several different areas. For instance, at Hornsey issues we include under 2 rapidly gave way to those of control we include under 3, 4 and 5 while at Hull demands covered the whole range. Nor is it necessarily the case that the struggle begins by focussing on the earlier demands and then leads on to the later ones. In many instances there have to be strong countermovements. For the first group to move tend to be those already ideologically discontented who are likely to be much more interested in problems related to the purpose of the university, its relationship to the more general political concerns and control over it, than to more elementary ones. Yet as the struggle proceeds, if they are to be successful, they must gather support from other sections of



students. There is a danger that students in arts and social science faculties will fail in this unless they use their greater freedom, time and, usually articulateness, to formulate demands that relate to the different sort of exploitation from which science and technology students suffer. But this does not mean that the initial demands have to be deliberately kept at a low level, or that the more politically minded should accept a 'non-political' struggle. Rather it implies applying a general analysis to a new set of problems, so as to raise the depth and breadth of the opposition.

Such demands do not merely challenge the present forms of control over the university. They also have implicit within them a completely different conception of higher education. It is up to socialist students to make these explicit through propaganda, while also taking the lead in articulating the particular demands. According to this conception education is not concerned with either an abstract academicism or with moulding students to the needs of existing society. Rather it is a critical process, whereby there is an ever-widening consciousness of society and the world.

This can only develop in structures where the dominating interests of the capitalist society and their privileged hangers-on within the universities no longer rule. In the long run this cannot be realised without the wider society itself being revolutionised. But in the meantime we can fight for such a transformation within the universities themselves under the slogans of control of them by all those who work within them and of an opening out of them to all who seriously wish to study, regardless of educational 'qualifications'.

Such demands will not be granted in anything less than a revolutionary situation. But they themselves can contribute to the creation of this in the long term by concretely posing a socialist alternative in one sphere. They embody part of a socialist vision for which people will fight. Doing so, they undermine capitalist ideology in institutions specifically designed to perpetuate it. Of course it is necessary for students to give this challenge a really biting edge by participating in the work of the revolutionary movement in the working class. The rule of ideology will only end when the workers overthrow the system which creates it - and for this the formation of a conscious revolutionary workers' movement is an absolute necessity. The battle of ideas in the university is a part of a broader struggle which must involve the students themselves off campus as well.

#### A National Students Movement

Even with the best of programs and the best of tactics a student movement confined to isolated campuses may be defeated. Only an expansion in to other institutions can prevent this with any certainty. It is this above all that points to the need for a movement rather than movements.

The official students union, the NUS, can play no role here. It is not merely that it is controlled by bureaucrats who are no longer even students, who see it as providing them with a base for careers in bureaucracies of the Labour Party or the NUT, and who are consequently of unflinching right wing views, opposing any rumblings of student militancy, employing the crudest of witch-hunt techniques against oppositionists, while at the international level being affiliated to what was for many years a CIA front, the ISC. Much more importantly, the NUS operates so far

removed from the mass of students that their typical reaction to it is one of bored indifference. For most of them it is no more than cut-rate travel agency. It has never done anything that is likely to affect their own futures, and they do not expect it to. A few students might participate occasionally in the twice yearly elections of delegates to the NUS conference, but will see in this nothing more than a game which 'union politicians' play. They are apathetic towards the NUS because to anyone but a would-be careerist, this is the most rational attitude.<sup>2</sup>

Like the individual student unions, NUS has a power structure built upon the indifference of most students. Unlike them, however, it does not provide even occasionally the opportunity for militants to speak to a mass audience. Bitter battles for electoral office take place, but few even know the issues involved (which is why the frequent witch-hunts are so effective).

Should student rebellion continue to gather momentum, the NUS bureaucracy will not for ever remain unaffected. The movement below will begin to be felt even by the old men at the top. But for the conceivable future at any rate the apathy of the mass of students, the containment of protests to isolated campuses, will continue to protect them. The odd left winger who manages to win elections will continue to find himself cut off from the sort of mass pressures that could overcome the entrenched hostility of the careerist majority, and will himself probably succumb to the cynicism of the latter. These may occasionally respond to increasing militancy below by opportunistically making the odd militant statement. But they will never encourage the spread of student insurgency. The NUS may reflect to the linking up of struggles, but it will never initiate this.

The bureaucratic irrelevance of NUS also goes part way in explaining the failure of previous attempts to establish inter-campus unity between radical students, in particular the RSA. This organisation tended to act as a pressure group on the NUS in the hope that a new activism would replace the existing bureaucratic conservatism. There were elements in RSA who conceived of its role as different, but these do not seem to have altered its overall orientation towards presenting slates at NUS councils. With rare exceptions they failed to build up any base for RSA among the rank and file in the campuses. Despite considerable success in generating protest over increase in fees for overseas students, they remained as an isolated group struggling among that minority of students that did care about NUS. Above all they failed to expose the gap between the NUS bureaucracy and the body of students in each university. In fact, given their chosen terrain of struggle they were bound to face exactly the same problem as NUS itself: of trying to translate demands downwards from the general campaign to the campus. Significantly, when the series of revolts that began at LSE broke out, RSA as an organisation had no influence despite the occasional prominence of its leading members.

#### From the bottom up

The real links between militant student bodies that are needed to counter the increasing national policies of the authorities (through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors etc) will have to be built from the bottom up. Without roots in the rank and file, the most preposterous name for an organisation means nothing.

On one level these links can be built between the mass student movements themselves. The national meetings and demonstrations of



art students are an example of this. Faced with common problems, students in different institutions can come to meaningfully identify with one another's struggles.

But there are considerable difficulties that are likely to defeat attempts at sustained national organisation of this sort. Firstly the 'moderates' in each separate institution will try to restrict practical demonstrations of support (for instance, at LSE the 'moderates' at one point told outside supporters of the sit-in to go home). Secondly, even when fighting over issues of national, and even explicitly political import, the concerns of most students are still very much confined to the individual campus in a very parochial way. Thirdly, even where meaningful links are established, they are unlikely to last much longer than the immediate period of conflict. Afterwards concerns of student solidarity have to compete with other more immediate considerations, such as exams, for the student's time.

This does not mean that attempts to link up movements should not be made. They are necessary both to sustain particular struggles and to broaden the students' general awareness of what is taking place. But it does mean that such links will only be sustained over time when they take on a different form.

This must be an organisation of militants rather than movements. Throughout our account of the conflict in the universities we stressed the continual debate that takes place within the student body. At every point 'militants' are confronted by 'moderates', those concerned with generalising and escalating the struggle so as to lead to victory with those concerned with narrowing its scope and depth. This debate is also a debate between opposed interpretations of what the role of the university and of the student is. On the one hand are those who see no basic opposition between the authorities and the needs of the students, on the other those who interpret this as yet one more antagonism between the ruling class and those it subjects. The central point is that those with the former interpretation, however much they as individuals may identify with the particular student demands, are bound to mislead the student body and lower its capacity for victory. For they see the disturbance to the normal life of the university that conflict brings as an evil, even if a necessary one. They have to combine with any desire for student victory a desire to end the conflict as soon as possible. For this reason they will always be seeing compromise solutions where none exist. In this they will be aided by those members of the teaching staff who will want either to bring the conflict to an immediate end, or to use it for their own particular interests (which can come into conflict with particular interests of the administration without, however, rejecting its total control).

This makes the existence of a conscious militant group within the rank and file particularly important. And this should not wait for the struggle itself to form it. It should exist before, during and after as a continual centre of criticism of the institution and the interests it serves. It cannot do this without both propagating a general view about society and carrying out a programme of theoretical education, not immediately related to student issues. It has to locate the problems of students and those issues the students are particularly concerned with (for instance racialism or Vietnam) within a more general socialist critique of capitalism. Only in this way can there exist a hard core of militants able to argue against every false argument of the 'moderates', every diversion from the staff.

### The RSSF

In many institutions this role is already performed by socialist societies. But not in the majority. That is why the newly formed Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation could play an important role.

The RSSF should try to build itself as a national body, with a national identity, but based upon functioning branches in as many colleges as possible. They should see their role as being to on the one hand carry out basic socialist education in the student body - for instance through regular political meetings, Marxist discussion groups, a weekly bookstall of revolutionary literature - and to formulate programmes for agitation over issues of concern to students. They have to link their general critique of capitalist society with the particular implications this has with in the field of higher education. It should be their concern as that section of the rank and file of the student body that has the clearest idea as to what it is about and as to what is the real origin of the problems students face. This should not involve keeping quiet about socialist commitment, but making it clear what implications this has for a particular section of the population dominated by capitalism.

Without such socialist groups in the colleges the student revolt will take place anyway. There will inevitably be a growing response to the transformations in the system of education British capitalism is carrying out on the cheap and at the expense of the students. Examples of successful struggles will stimulate others to take the same path. But without continuous socialist criticism among the rank and file it will be much easier for the established student 'leaders' to sell out such struggles. By the time the mass of students see through them it may well be too late. A viable RSSF group should be necessary not only so as to provide a constant stream of new socialists for activity outside the university, but in order to help ensure clarity and success for the struggle inside.

RSSF could provide the linkage between isolated sections of students. It could exist in every college as a centre pointing out the relevance of activities in other colleges. It could be continually articulating new programmes relevant to the forms of oppression suffered by previously inactive sections of the student body (so as for example to bring technologists into action alongside already struggling arts students). But it cannot do this unless it has viable roots inside the institutions of higher education. There is a danger that it will not develop these either because its members, vicariously identifying with global struggles, do not participate in more localised ones, or because they regard RSSF as a substitute for (or competitor with) existing outside political groups. In fact RSSF can be complementary to the revolutionary groups outside the colleges (in particular, one hopes, International Socialism) by building local socialist student groups that by their education and agitation can provide a continual flow of recruits for outside activity.

No-one can tell with any certainty whether RSSF will succeed in developing along these lines. If it fails, however, the job of exposing the pretensions of the NUS and local union bureaucrats will be more difficult, the problems of obtaining effective solidarity between campuses harder. The movement will continue to grow, but many more false turns will be taken. It is because we believe that this can be avoided with the elaboration of the sort of strategies we have outlined that we are attempting to aid the building of the RSSF.



footnotes

1. One authority has suggested that both entry requirements to university and the standard of degree exams have tended to rise over the years. (E. E. Robinson, op cit, p18 and 45)
2. For analyses of the concept of "common sense" see Antonio Gramsci "Storico Materralismo" (Turin 1948) Parts of this are translated (in France) in Oevres Choisies (Editions Sociales, Paris 1959) and less (in English) in "The Modern Prince" (London 1957)
3. For an analysis of N.U.S. history see David Widgery, in forthcoming NLR/Penguin book on students.

Published by International Socialism, 35 Gilden Road, NW5  
Printed by Socialist Review Publishing Co. Ltd., Paxton  
Works, Paxton Road, London N17



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