

ARE PHD'S IN SURPLUS CANADIAN EMPLOYMENT

IS THERE TRUTH TO THE QU

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NO

A former Vancouver Sun reporter, Mrs. Rosemary Neering, BA'67, is now a free-lance writer.

THEY COINED A NAME for it in the mid-Sixties—brain drain.

Pictures were painted of the all-important little grey cells seeping across the borders of Canada, drawn inexorably by jobs, money, prestige. And with them, according to the theory, went Canada's hopes for excellence in academic, technological and research establishments.

Universities lamented the lack of good Canadian talent for academic positions. Industry claimed it could find few Canadians to take its top research posts. And governments said they were hard-pressed to lure Canadians into research jobs. As little as three years ago, prominent university spokesmen were calling for some way of plugging the brain drain, or of stepping up Canadian production of students with advanced degrees.

Suddenly, amid all this, an embarrassing fact appeared. Canadians who were graduating with masters and, particularly, doctorate degrees were having difficulty finding suitable jobs. And with scarcely a "Whoops-excuse me," brain drain became brain gain, and people began worrying about finding jobs for the sudden oversupply of products from Canadian graduate schools.

The problem is a difficult one to define. There are few PhD holders without jobs. There are few who have a job in a field unrelated to their field of study. There are few statistics on the subject and even fewer reliable ones.

And claims made by those emphasizing the seriousness of the job situation have a habit of disintegrating under close scrutiny. The PhD physicist forced into a job selling stocks and bonds says he is an investment counsellor because he wants to be one, has always been interested in the field. The mathematics PhD who is a longshoreman turns out to have graduated in 1964, before jobs became scarcer.

All that seems definite is that there are fewer jobs available now than there were a few years ago. Where a PhD student might have had four or five job offers by January of his graduating year then, now he feels lucky to have had one offer by June.

Professor William Armstrong, Deputy President of UBC and a member of the Science Council of Canada, outlines the situation: "On a short-term basis, the problem is certainly serious. Many PhD graduates have been unable to get work in the exact field in which they have been trained. The Science Council has looked carefully and can't find any PhDs without jobs. But some have gone into jobs in administration and management, not research."

A year ago, the Graduate Student Association of UBC produced a brief, subsequently presented to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, on the employment situation for UBC advanced graduates. It reported that PhD graduates in some disciplines, notably botany, chemistry, mathematics, some fields of engineering, physics, physiology and zoology, were having difficulty finding good positions. Other disciplines admitted a lack of present difficulties, but anticipated some in the years ahead. Still others said there was little likelihood in the foreseeable future that the supply of advanced graduates would exceed the demand.

One complicating factor for any comprehensive survey of job-student ratios is the fact that many students with PhDs are now taking extended post-doctoral fellowships. A few years ago, a one year post-doc was

not uncommon; now it frequently stretches to two, three, or even four years, as the holder looks around for a suitable job. These people show up neither in student statistics nor in employment statistics; instead, they form a holding pool of highly trained people.

There are three main causes for whatever tightening that has occurred in the job situation. First is the massive increase in the number of students with advanced degrees graduating from Canadian universities. National estimates place the

annual increase in enrolment at sciences and engineering has been higher than that of Canada's PhDs per capita. The National Research Council suggests that graduates in two fields will be in surplus by 1972.

The second world situation among developed nations is producing more than she can absorb, particularly in the States, could be an attractive environmental factor attracting advanced degree holders. Figures on university faculty positions vary, but the total number of positions in universities and employers of advanced degree holders in Canada is large number, primarily from the United States. Figures suggest that graduate students at universities are some of the home country graduate workers they remain, they often have a job than not.

The third factor is the Canadian self. There are opportunities with advanced degrees, government three of the increase past few years have been hit by have slowed increases in str relying more colleges which type of credit facilities. The battle against costs has put new staff, replacement of Canadian income spending was has more and people with

These observations suggest: Cut back on government. Cut out it deprives the government the university pand. Force specific program research.

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Early published Manpower 1972", which as the " in the Science the number degree was a certain our present under-employment considered pessimistic were accepted

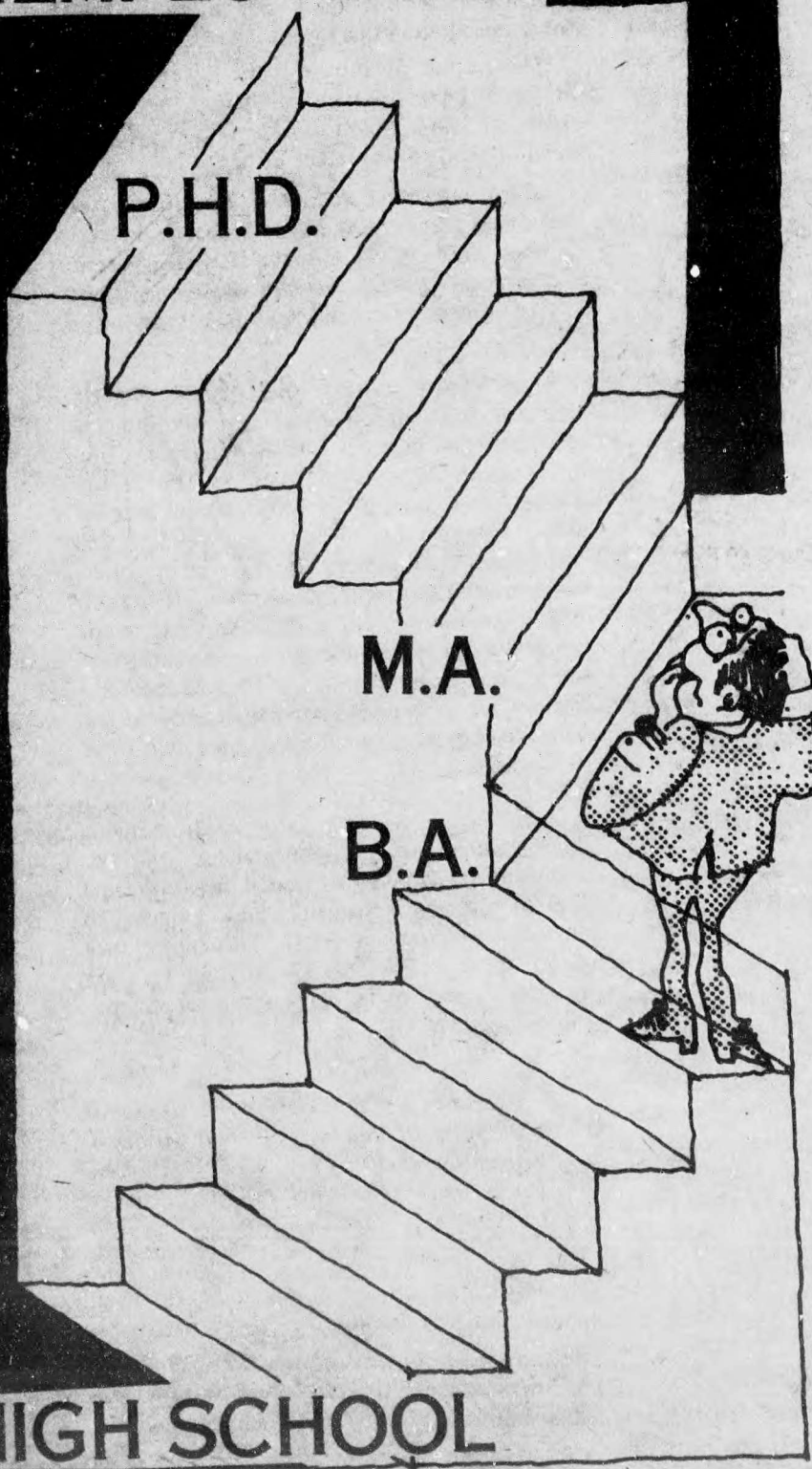
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management appreciable rate of drop in the Bon curve in university employment in 1968. in 1972. since it

UNEMPLOYMENT



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