

British student movement

Special to the Gateway

The problems of higher education in Great Britain have become more complicated and serious in the past few years. This development is a result of the sharply developing general crisis of the capitalist system in thadversely.

This article by Digby Jacks, "Several Aspects of the British Student Movement", deals with the current situation of higher education in Great Britain, the various positions taken by the student movement, and its future tasks.

Higher education in Britain has expanded considerably during the last ten years. The reasons for this development are similar to those that have been evident in other capitalist countries: namely, the requirements of technological change and the pressure for educational change. The productive processes have become more sophisticated, more mechanized and more automated. Workers at all levels have now become more educated, better trained and more adaptable. At the "white-collar" level, it is no longer sufficient to have pen-pushers or people who are capable of ordering other workers around. People with more specialized skills are necessary. Not only has higher education expanded in quantitative terms, but also many new courses have been developed - particularly off-shoots of the applied sciences and social sciences, which are more directly related to the contemporary needs of industry.

Related to this change has been the acceleration of a demand for education on the part of young people. This is partly to be seen as a desire for improved employment and career opportunities (and is therefore related to the above-mentioned technological change). It is also, however, a profound expression of a wish for, and an expectation of, living different and better lives.

Both technological and educational changes have had a profound effect on the student movement. On one level, the development of "white-collar" unionism in industry - a result of the changing nature of production - is paralleled by the development of student unionism in higher education. The existing student organizations have been and are being transformed into bodies more capable of fighting for and advancing their member's interests. New ones have been evolved and new forms of action employed. On another level, expanded access to higher education has generated a more critical attitude amongst students. Quite rightly, it is no longer regarded as a privilege to enter higher education, as it once was. Students are increasingly regarding higher education as their right. Accordingly, they are not so willing as they once were to accept automatically and uncritically what is provided as higher education. In addition, the objective circumstances of students have changed. Particularly the job expectations a student can have, have of necessity become more modest. More graduates competing for the same number of high-status jobs has had a radicalizing effect on some. Graduate unemployment has forced many students to lose their illusions about the sort of life with which capitalism can in political and educational terms, a different form of student movement has emerged. It is a mass phenomenon, prepared to fight for educational and social change and anxious to regulate and conduct its affairs in a democratic fashion, contrary to the manner of government of the colleges and universities of which the students are a part.

In this situation, a veritable extravaganza of theories and strategies for the student movement has been devised. Grandiose theories concerning the "student vanguard", the "red base" and the "student detonator" have appeared. Many of these overemphasize the potentiality of student action and endow it with uniquely revolutionary properties. My contention is, not that the student body has no wider political role, but rather that one of the prime areas of effective action is in the educational arena, and it is on this that I wish to concentrate in this article. In my view, an assertion to the contrary denies the importance of a student mass movement and emphasizes minority-based interventions from the politically most active students in the political and industrial areas of the class struggle.

Having expanded quantitatively and qualitatively in the last decade, higher education in Britain is now entering a new phase. Capitalism has not solved the problem of unemployment, industrial production is stagnant, governments-contra to the dictates of Keynesian economics- now wish to restrict public and educational expenditure. Politicians education. To its critics, the expansion of higher education has not fulfilled its expectation; it was thought that more scientifically and technologically trained manpower would guarantee economic expansion and prosperity. The question "Is it all worth it?" is now being asked.

While no major governmental decisions have as yet been taken by the present Conservative Government, there has been sufficient indication from the decisions that have been taken on more peripheral matters that an economy drive will be launched. This may take several forms - a shortening of the average length of higher educational courses, a lowering of the parental home. Meanwhile, some sort of scheme of partial loans for student support is being introduced, among other measures.

The student movement must sharpen and pose its own educational demands in the face of restrictionist policies. From experience in Britain, these are, in general terms, as follows:

1). Access to higher education must be broadened. Higher education is not a matter of the creation or continuation of a middle-class elite. Admission requirements to colleges and universities must be reformed so that wider sections of the age group in question and of the adult population may gain access to them.

2) Arbitrary barriers between academic subjects, institutions and sectors of higher education should be broken down. Courses should be organized less to suit the traditional academic subjects and career desires of the academic hierarchy.

3). Selection and assessment techniques should be less competitive and lay greater stress on cooperative activities. The students' critical faculties should be sharpened and employed more actively in the exercise of choice over a wider range of educational options.

4). Students' choice should, in addition, be given greater weight in the running of colleges and universities. The students' voice in college government should be strengthened - along-side that of all teachers (not just professors and heads of departments), ancillary staff and more democratic representatives of the population as a whole.

5). The content of courses should be altered in order to make them deal more systematically with the major social problems that people face. There should be a component in every student's course in which there is an attempt to grapple with social problems directly.



editorial

Spectators beware

Anyone who has watched a hockey game live or on television knows that during the course of a game something in the neighbourhood of 10 or 20 pucks are shot or deflected out of play into the stands.

In U of A's Varsity arena more pucks are put out of play because of the lack of plexiglass around the perimeter of the ice surface.

Clearing shots present the greatest danger to Bear fans. Most players tend to favor the use of the curvedstick which makes the puck do some pretty strange things. A good man with a curved stick can cause the puck to curve like a baseball, rise, drop or spin and all of this happens at speeds up to 90 miles-per-hour. There are not too many people around who can use the curved blade without sacrificing a great deal of control.

Thus, on a penalty, when the defender's idea is to get the puck out of his zone as quickly as possible, it is not unusual for it to be cleared with a mad swipe rather than taking the time to put it where a man wants it. They generally aim it down through centre or try to bounce it off the boards. When it is directed at the boards with a golf swing, the puck generally rises above the level of the boards and into the crowd (particularly towards those who watch the game from the first three rows above ice level).

Gordon Littlefair, a spectator at last Monday's Golden Bear/Varsity Blues game, took the full force of a clearing shot from a Blues' player in his right eye. He was admitted to the University Hospital with a severe injury. The extent of the damage has not been revealed at the time of this writing.

The cost of extending the plexiglass around the rink would be in the neighborhood of \$20 or 30,000. The end zone plexiglass rises 4½ feet above the boards and an extension 3 or 3½ feet above them would provide adequate protection for spectators.

Ray Kelly, head trainer at the U of A, treated an average of one spectator per game last year for cuts and lumps caused by pucks shot out of the rink.

Plexiglass will not eliminate this problem by any means but it certainly will cut down the number of minor injuries to spectators by better than half. It will also speed the game up when pucks are not put out of play so often.

Dean Van Vliet has written to Dr. Neill planning VP for the university recommending that action be taken to install plexiglass during the Christmas break.

Paul Cadogan

The Gateway

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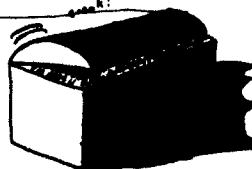
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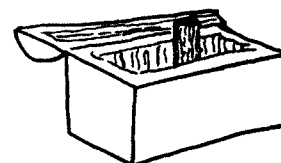


I furiously
tore open
the rotted door...
and there it
was
The
Casket!!

As Midnight
was sounded
by a far-off
Parish
Steeple,
the coffin
lid slowly
opened;
the Time
Had Come...



I lunged forward
sickened by what I
saw, sickened by the
consequences if I failed!
With all the force
I had I struck
and screamed...



How Do
You Like
Your
Stake?!!