

## BRITAIN

● Figures on graduate employment from three of Britain's top universities don't conform with everyone's predilections when it comes to science graduates.

The view heard these days is that graduates, especially from Oxford, Cambridge and London, are likely to go into the types of employment which served Empire well but which are of less obvious use in the modern industrial era. The suggestion is that they are most likely to go into central and local government or teaching when they aren't busy becoming perpetual students by doing post-graduate study. Otherwise they are likely to be joining the professions—becoming accountants or solicitors, moving into banking or insurance—or joining the media by going into journalism, broadcasting or publishing. What they aren't doing, the argument goes, is helping to boost Britain's long term economic potential by going into directly productive employment in industry.

Figures giving details of employment of 1976 science graduates from Oxford, Cambridge and London do not appear to bear these assertions out. Even after making allowances for difficulties in interpreting the statistics in precisely comparable terms, the indications are that Britain's graduates in the pure sciences, if they are not going into research, are most likely to go into industry.

That they are likely to go on to further study is strongly indicated by the figures for both Oxford and Cambridge, where a high proportion, around one-third, of the men science graduates from both places opted for this course. But of the 390 Oxford men science graduates who worked in other fields in Britain after graduating, 155 went into industry; and of the 193 Cambridge science graduates, 88 did so. For London, the figure was 209 out of 497.

For the public service and education, moreover, the figures are not high. Just 20 out of 193 from Cambridge went into the public service, and 23 directly or indirectly into teaching. The comparable figures from Oxford are 65 and 44 (out of 390) and from London 75 and 68 (out of 497). Similar tendencies are apparent in figures for accountancy (32, 58, 47) and for banking and insurance (7, not available, and 34). And from all three universities together a total of only 21 men went into the media or elected to become solicitors.

What makes the figures even more interesting is that similar trends, though less marked, can be identified

for arts and social studies graduates. At the other end of the university machine, meanwhile, the number of entrants into tertiary education who go into science and engineering remains a prominent topic, not least, it seems, because the facts are disputed. At the beginning of the month the Education and Science Secretary, Mrs Shirley Williams, described the need to attract students into science



and engineering courses as "urgent". Her department is at the moment investigating whether to introduce a form of scholarship to encourage sixth-formers to specialise in science and engineering. But the Vice-Chancellor of Durham has warned of a glut of engineers, and the London University Institute of Education is saying the shortage of engineers and scientists is a myth.

● The state of Britain's manufacturing industry is an issue unlikely to be superseded in importance by questions about her agriculture, itself an industry. At the end of last month, though, it was announced that the country's standing Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, now under the chairmanship of Professor Hans Kornberg, was to examine how the trend towards large livestock units and the greater use of fertilisers and pesticides posed an increased risk of pollution. The Commission also wants to examine the vulnerability of agriculture to industrial pollution.

Among the bodies which might show an interest is the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC). A report it published last week suggests that financial assistance and advice on conservation should be given to farmers if the problems their farming practices create for wildlife are to be alleviated. The report estimates that if all farms were to be totally modern-

ised, about 80% of the bird and 95% of the butterfly species would be lost from the farmed landscape. The NCC wants a policy of wise land use which provides for the conservation of wildlife as well as increased food production.

Increased food production was just one of the points broached last week by Professor John Bowman, the Director of the Centre for Agricultural Strategy at the University of Reading, when he spoke about an agriculture strategy for Britain. He talked of food consumption ("comfortably in excess of or equivalent to recommended minimum levels for normal life"), of changing eating habits to help feed others less fortunate (that had "little to commend it"), curtailing animal production, because of worries about its cruelty or its energy inefficiency ("it is more justifiable to argue for the modification of production systems so they are based more on feed inputs of no direct use to man"), and justifying protectionist policies in terms of security (there are sound arguments for achieving security "through an increase in the world trade of all commodities, not least of which are food commodities").

He also presented the preliminary findings from the Centre's own model of the UK agricultural economy. Its projections for a future with a higher degree of self-sufficiency and lower import costs indicated broadly that, even allowing for modifications in diet, meat production was expected to contract, the dairy sector, sugar beet and oilseed rape were expected to expand, and the cereal acreage would remain largely unchanged. But technical and economic efficiency were unlikely to be the only objectives of public policy; justice, equity and security could take precedence.

● The University of Bradford's Disaster Research Unit, which was established in December 1973 and has just three members, is now fighting for its survival. When the initial period of three years for which the unit was financed came to an end late last year, the university (which provided the funds along with the Leverhulme Trust and the Ministry of Overseas Development) agreed to finance a further year pending the outcome of a review. This showed that with the cuts it faced the university could not support the unit. Now the unit has stopped work while its members ask the government, international agencies and trusts for more funds.

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