

Dead Ends

From the *Montreal Star*, 11th March 1977:

The growing army of unemployed young people has reached an all-time record of seven million in the world's 24 richest countries, the International Labor Organization says.

An ILO study blamed the joblessness on society's indifference, reluctance on the part of many employers to hire those without experience, and an inadequate educational system. The report called the situation the industrialized world's gravest problem.

The seven million without work in the 24 countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development are enough to form an entire nation where no one is older than 25 years and prospects at best are uncertain, the ILO said.

"Even if the recession miraculously disappeared overnight, there would still be large numbers of youths without jobs walking the streets with little hope that something would turn up," the study said.

Most youngsters leaving school find themselves confronted with a strange world of labor requiring skills, knowledge and behaviour they have not acquired. The study said more and more youngsters fail to meet the standards required for training in modern industry, and "unprepared for the work game, feel they face a stacked deck. This leads to apathy, stress, drifting and other social problems."

"Still another roadlock is the reluctance of many employers to hire young people because it costs more to break them in than older workers and because their output is lower, at least at the beginning of employment."

It said most of the richer countries have taken steps to improve education and provide work for jobless youngsters. But no one has yet figured out a quick, permanent solution — nor has the tide yet turned in favor of the young unemployed.

The study cited few figures, but one example it gave was for Britain, where it said the number of jobless teen-agers jumped to 58,000 in 1971 from 28,000 in 1968, to 175,000 in 1975 and more than 200,000 last year.

It reported a similar pattern in recent years in Canada, France, Italy, the U.S. and other countries of the industrialized West, where it said people under 25 years, 22 per cent of the total population, make up 40 per cent of the unemployed.

(Dateline: Geneva — *Associated Press*)

The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of November 6th, 1977, on the students of the United States:

The economic recession has put a premium on marketable skills . . .

At the same time there has been an absolute drop in the number of high-school graduates who go straight on to college. Most people's image of the typical college freshman is of an 18- or 19-year-old, leaving home and school for the first time.

By 1971 he or she formed a third of the American student body. By 1974 it was down to a quarter.

On the students of Germany (October 23rd):

But teachers are not alone in facing the prospect of unemployment after their studies. There are estimates that by 1900, 180,000 scientists and engineers will be unemployed; 60,000 journalists, interpreters, librarians and artists and 50,000 lawyers will be looking for employment in vain.

In view of such horrifying predictions, it is difficult to understand why so little thought is given to solving the long term problem of graduate unemployment. Nobody seems to have a solution.

. . . today's unrest at universities revolves around matters that have little to do with politics but affect the students directly and have led to widespread frustration and insecurity.

On the students of France (October 23rd):

Instead of confrontation, the mood is one of practical worries, cynicism over politics and bewilderment about what a university is supposed to be for nowadays . . .

Many people in universities put their hopes in a change of government next year. "If the Left wins, we shall be saved. Even if the Right wins, they are sure to be more on the defensive than now . . ."

However . . . neither Socialists nor Communists have dared to question some outmoded and abused academic privileges. Since the malaise reflects some of the deepest problems in French society, it will obviously need more than a general election to put the universities right.

On the students of Japan (November 6th):

The question is bound to arise with new acuteness: are so many arts and economics graduates really necessary, when Japan, like Western industrial countries, is experiencing a growing shortage of labour with scientific and technical skills?

Not surprisingly, one finds that a reaction has set in against a grimly competitive and wasteful system of education . . .

For all the talk about reform, and the slings and arrows of recession and unemployment, basic attitudes in this goal-oriented society are not about to change.