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This issue of *Radical Philosophy* contains several articles on education. We are particularly glad about this because we feel that although most radical intellectuals spend their working lives in education they have rarely considered what the significance of this is.

It is part of the cunning of bourgeois culture that it has confined knowledge to special institutions. It has made knowledge the property of an exclusive scholarly guild; and has thus been able to congratulate itself on allowing knowledge to develop free from external distortions, at least in so-called 'higher' education.

These institutions of higher education, of course, also take students, whom the guardians of knowledge are supposed to educate. A hundred, or even fifty years ago, most of the students were males from the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Higher education was partly a playground for young gentlemen; but it was also a nursery for aspiring scholars who hoped to gain admission to the academic elite themselves. They would have to assimilate the language and manners of the inmates - just as many students still do today. (For discussion of this in relation to philosophy, see any issue of *Radical Philosophy*, and in particular Trevor Pateman's article printed below). In order to gain admission to the academic citadel, they would have to survive a trial by exams. The examination system served to regulate admission to the scholarly elite.

The publicly stated purpose of exams seems not to have changed since the days of the gentlemen scholars. Modern academics may worry about the efficiency of various methods of assessment (and perhaps they should get more worried - see George Molnar's article in this issue), and they may disapprove of exams on humanitarian grounds, but they still tend to think that exams are educationally indispensable. From their point of view, exams encourage students to study and they give students objective estimates of their progress towards mastery of the scholarly skills. This attitude is reactionary and unfounded. It assumes that exclusive institutions where scholars pass on their mystery to students are the natural means for the production and reproduction of knowledge; and that this is the function which actual educational institutions fulfil. It assumes that the real function of higher education corresponds to its ostensible one.

Over the last twenty years, higher education has become the natural destiny of large numbers of eighteen year old school leavers, who do not seek, or get, much in the way of serious intellectual training and who have no ambition to join the academic elite. The main thing they want is a paper qualification: 'BA means goodbye'. (See Jon Davies' article in *RP7*). Such education as they get probably comes from living away from home with very little money, rather than from their teachers. Knowledge, for them, is a pointless syllabus to be mastered before the final exams come and the grant runs out; and then to be forgotten. Exams are not so much mechanisms for regulating the affairs of the academic elite, as devices for grading and degrading students for the benefit of future employers. Educational institutions become agencies of social control rather than institutions for the production of knowledge.

A degree is now a condition of entry into many management posts. Some employers pay lip service to the idea that higher education fits people for management because it gives them intellectual training. Sainsbury's mysteriously promise graduates 'the opportunity to apply their hard won knowledge'; and the Inland Revenue entices (honours) graduates with 'a career that appeals to reason'. But in March a full page advertisement appeared in the national press which had no truck with this pretence. Thirty 'top industrialists' gave their names to a declaration that people got as much from three years in the army as from three years at college. Higher education, they implied, had much the same effect on people as military discipline. It did not occur to them to make the familiar complaint about the subversive effects of education; and they did not mention knowledge - the ostensible content of education - at all.

Some radicals would say that since the objective function of education is social control, there is no point in struggling inside educational institutions; and they may even end up lamenting the expansion of higher education as bitterly as any student-bashing Tory. This seems to us to be dangerously wrong. The conflict between knowledge, which is the ostensible content of education, and the objective function of the institutions which provide it, needs to be developed and directed, not abandoned or ignored.

A good degree.

To do it justice an ordinary job never be high. Right. We send me about and the officer

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