

# aset

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## Comment

Britain in recent years has undergone its "second industrial revolution". The uptake of the hi tech challenge has shown our ability to react to the progress of our international competitors. The development of these industries has highlighted the importance of the professional manager and the skilled operator, it also makes a dramatic contrast to the traditional industries, the forerunners of the "first industrial revolution".

Emphasis has centred on the need to educate school leavers that industry is a worthwhile career. It is about time that some emphasis was placed on educating our traditional industries that if they are to prosper, indeed survive modern competition, then they must be prepared to invest in trained staff and therefore the training that this necessitates. We can no longer afford to accept the argument that the decline of traditional industries is caused by the flood of cheap imports, instead we must act positively so that we can compete on an equal footing.

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# A New Role For Higher Education

This conference, which attracted over 150 delegates, was addressed by the most impressive and influential set of speakers to be assembled at the annual conference arranged by ASET and CRAC (Careers Research & Advisory Council).

Both Christopher Ball, Chairman of NAB, and Sir Peter Swinnerton Dyer, Chairman of UGC, spoke about the future demand for Higher Education and whether the drop in numbers of eighteen year olds would lead to a drop in the numbers in Universities and Polytechnics. Both thought that the long term answer was not clear, but the short term answer was certainly not. Christopher Ball thought that 'informed student demand' should be the single most important criterion for determining size. Sir Peter readily accepted that any further cuts would be bettered addressed by closing an institution rather than accepting an unplanned piecemeal approach through each University. Christopher Ball thought that the public sector of higher education, which was now larger than the University sector, was more able to respond flexibly to external requirements and constraints.

Sir Monty Finnieston gave a typically lively address and made the after-dinner session far from soporific. He referred to the tremendous record of British inventiveness but our appalling record in developing ideas through to production. He thought this was a reflection of attitudes in traditional higher education and the lack of proper dialogue between the commercial side of manufacturing industry and academia.

Kenneth Durham, Chairman of Unilever, spoke of the importance of Industrial involvement in higher education and of the necessity to change both the attitudes of industrialists and academics to each other. He was a keen advocate of exchanges between industry and higher education. "It was vital", he said, "for each side to articulate more clearly its requirements of the other".

Professor Kingman, Chairman of SERC, described the Council's role and made reference to the recent announcement which would, hopefully, lead to the Polytechnics having greater freedom in establishing consultancy and contracts with industry. Some of the regional brokerage situations the Council is now involved in sounded particularly interesting.

Professor Gareth Williams of Lancaster University and Dr. Illston, Director of Hatfield Polytechnic, made interesting contributions concerning the Leverhulme reports and changes in Engineering Education respectively.

The highlight of the Conference was the address by Sir Keith Joseph, who, shunning the audio aids and microphones, etc., adopted

almost a debating chamber style. He made it very clear that if anyone had any opinions on changes which could be made in higher education or had requirements of the system, then they should write to him and make their opinions known. Quite clearly he saw the Government's rôle not as a central planner but as a response mechanism to the needs of the users. The single most important message he had for academics on both sides of the binary line was that they should seek to be less dependent on a single source of funds, i.e. the State which was currently providing £3,000 million p.a.

As usual the conference was expertly administered by Alan Jamieson and his team from CRAC and Churchill College provided a convivial setting for an excellent and stimulating conference.

R.M. Brewer.

## The Future Of Sandwich Education

A joint conference with the Industrial Society.

Sir Richard Cave, Chairman of Thorn EMI, opened the conference by showing his enormous support of Sandwich Education illustrated by the fact that this company employ both business and engineering undergraduates on this basis. He pointed out that this country does not provide enough engineers and that Sandwich Education can remedy this. By 1985, 42% of Japanese undergraduates will be engineer-trained; in the UK, it will be 12½%.



John Watson from Ford put forward the benefits of Sandwich Education to Industry and suggested that it gave employers the opportunity to assess future employment potential in a much more practical way than a milk round interview. *continued on page 2..*

