

OLD WORLD

JOB MARKET

Glut of Graduates

GLOOMY tales of a worsening job market for graduates are building up now that the appointments boards of British universities have completed their statistics on the fate of the 1969 output. For some years the number of first-degree graduates has been growing faster than the available jobs and there now seems to be a serious surplus of graduates—last year about one in twenty-five was still looking for a job at the end of December. As a proportion of the total, this unemployment rate is nearly twice as great as the corresponding figure for 1966 (see table).

Most universities have felt the pinch. At Manchester, which takes pride in being able to place its graduates, the unemployment figures for 1969 have leapt up to 8 per cent among those with degrees in the arts or social studies—almost double the 1968 proportion—while 5 per cent of pure scientists and 4 per cent of applied scientists have failed to find jobs (compared with about 3 per cent in each category in 1968). Mr B. Holloway, secretary of the appointments board at Manchester, believes that supply began to exceed demand during 1967; until then, university expansion had been catching up with a backlog of employers' needs. Now, however, overproduction is obvious among arts graduates and beginning also to be noticeable for scientists.

Chemists with first degrees form a particularly troublesome group, for the universities turned out 500 more of them in 1969 than in 1968, and some appointments officers are finding that the market is saturated even for PhD chemists. Mr Holloway, for example, argues that closer attention should be paid to the recommendations of the Swann report on scientific manpower which called not only for a greater output of scientists and technologists but also for their courses to be made broad enough to equip them for jobs beyond the laboratory. The latter point, Mr Holloway implies, is not receiving the attention it deserves, for it may be the only way of avoiding a huge excess of people trained solely in research techniques. Meanwhile, the employment situation for the 1970 output looks like being still worse. The employers' annual recruiting circus is largely completed during the term before Easter, yet one university appointments officer last week interviewed twenty-nine final year science and technology students and found that only two had

been offered jobs. Although details of the remaining vacancies will be passed around the appointments boards in the summer, there are all the signs and portents of a bad year.

One or two universities, it is true, have more cheerful news to report, and at Leeds, the unemployment figure last year was only 2 per cent. Here, however, a large proportion of the graduates (9 per cent) have not been traced. Mr A. Town, of the Leeds appointments board, thinks that most of them will have found jobs, because otherwise they would have come back for more help, but comparison with the Manchester figures suggests that unemployment can be greater among the untraceable graduates. As for the future, the 1,300 university places for science and engineering students that remained vacant when the present academic year began, may yet turn out to be less of a disaster than was feared.

FISHERIES

Salmon Battle Continues

ATTEMPTS in Denmark to oppose the mooted international ban on salmon fishing in the North Atlantic have been running into trouble of late. The ban is being urged because several countries, Britain in particular, fear that the catching of salmon on the high seas may threaten their own inshore fisheries and investment in breeding and conservation (see *Nature*, 225, 887; 1970); only Sweden and West Germany support Denmark in wanting to carry on fishing. But the abolitionists have now been joined actively by Greenland, which claims that the drift nets used in the principal fishing area (which is near Greenland) are catching the guillemots and seals that the inhabitants eat. This move is embarrassing for the Danish Minister of Fisheries, Mr A. C. Normann, in as far as he happens also to be Minister for Greenland.

Last week Mr Normann flew to London for talks with Mr James Hoy, Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for an exchange of views that was said to be "practical, frank and cordial". Mr Normann had earlier indicated that, if the worst comes to the worst, Denmark can resign from the two fisheries commissions that control North Atlantic fishing. He has to contend at the same time with fears that other countries may in return impose sanctions on Danish exports such as beer and bacon. One of the commissions, the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, is now meeting in London, but its salmon responsibilities cover only the less important fishery off Norway. The International Commission for North-West Atlantic Fisheries, which deals with the Greenland area, meets in St John's, Newfoundland, next month; the Greenlanders have asked Mr Normann to put their case to this meeting, but he has refused their request.

COMPUTER POLICY

Mr Benn's Computer Jungle

ENDEAVOURING to find his way through what he called the data processing jungle, Mr Airey Neave and his colleagues on subcommittee D of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, which is investigating the British computing scene, have been taking

Table 1. UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG UNIVERSITY GRADUATES 1966-69

	1966	1967	1968	1969
No. graduating with first degrees	32,166	36,528	42,615	45,000*
No. seeking employment at December 31	728	1,234	1,656	1,900*
Percentage seeking employment	2.3	3.4	3.6	4.2*

* Estimated figures. Other figures derived from annual surveys by the University Grants Committee (*First Employment of University Graduates*, HMSO, London; 1967, 1968, 1970).