

Letter

To Hans Lobstein, (S & S February 1977)

Dear Hans,

I was interested to see your note in 'Self and Society' on 'Unemployment - Who gets the Jobs'.

I very much share what Liz Wilson has to say about the need to help some students and graduates in understanding what is happening during an interview. I should like to think that during their university experience they had had some education in social skills, if only to help them cope with the work done in seminars within the university course. However, one of the consequences of higher education expansion seems to be that whereas the small elite may still get places in industry and the public service, and in universities, by a certain cultivated self-confidence and intellectual prowess, a very large number of our students emerge well educated in their subject but largely lacking the social skills which are essential at interviews and to perform most jobs.

We have found increasingly in our Careers Centre that it is important to provide help with such basic things as writing letters and filling in application forms as well as in interviews. At this time of year we are running quite a number of small interview workshops and individual mock interviews to help some of those actively engaged in seeking jobs but who do not seem able to get themselves across to employers. One of the things I note is that to give honest feedback to a student about the impression he or she makes is greatly appreciated and often results in considerable positive change. I think this is a reflection on university society where honest feedback from peers and staff is hard to come by.

Just before Christmas 1976, a group of us from East Anglia, Sussex, Hatfield Polytechnic, The City University and City of London Polytechnic, got together to staff a one and a half day workshop for unemployed graduates who were able to get to London. We advertised it in two editions of the fortnightly 'Current Vacancies' list from our Central Services Unit,

so that those who were actively seeking jobs would have seen the notice. We had about 100 enquiries and 28 people actually came, having paid travelling costs and £7 to cover accommodation and meals. Some came from as far afield as Scotland, but the majority were from London, the Home Counties and the Midlands. The programme consisted of a Life Planning Workshop run from 2.00 p.m. - 10 p.m. on the first day, and then 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. on the second day spent looking at application forms, role playing interviews and discussing possible future strategies. Most of the work was done in small groups of 4, but we had two formal sessions with talks on the current job market and the mechanics of making applications for advertised posts.

The first impression we had, and one we came away with, was the high degree of motivation on the part of the young graduates, some of whom had made nearly 200 applications and almost all of whom were feeling very isolated and some depressed. Their reasons for lack of success obviously varied a great deal but one could pick out such things as making applications for unrealistic aims, lack of certainty about their objectives and certain problems in communication. Quite a number seemed to have got stuck in a rut of making applications unrealistically because it was easier to go on doing this than to make the effort on their own to re-assess the situation and change objectives.

A month after the workshop we sent a questionnaire to the participants and a personal letter written by the staff member who had looked after their small group. Virtually everyone has replied and we are in the process of trying to draw some conclusions from the questionnaires and have a meeting of all the staff at Hatfield Polytechnic next week.

Our small venture underlined the usefulness of this activity but it was something which was conceived and staffed by Careers Advisers. Colleagues of mine have recognised the need for self help groups of the kind that Liz Wilson suggests, if such a group would be got going then Carrers Advisers might be used as specialist resources rather than as organisers and orator figures. Of course a major snag is that many

young graduates who are unemployed and in need of help are isolated and have a dubious attitude towards contacting either their university tutor or a Careers Service which may be seen as an agent of the system and not likely to offer help to their particular needs. I should like to see us tackle this problem locally in Norfolk and would be glad to hear of any work

that other people may be doing.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

William Hallidie Smith
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The Antioch Master of Arts Degree

Eleven students taking the Individualized Master of Arts degree in Humanistic Psychology, offered by Antioch College through its London-based Centre for British Studies, are now nearing the end of their first term. Seven more students are expected to enrol before the end of June, and thereafter numbers will be limited to sixteen to twenty students each year.

The Masters students are an International bunch, coming from England, South Africa, Canada, and America. Currently, three students are training in Dr Frank Lake's course in Primal Therapy at Quaesitor, while another is studying the Radix form of Bio-energetics under Laura Dillon. The specially-designed seminars include Anatomy and Physiology for Humanistic Psychology, given by Peter Payne; History of Psychological Thought III: The New Therapies, with Tom Feldberg; and Philosophical Psychology, led by Dr Steven Gans.

Starting this Autumn, a BA degree completion programme will enable students to combine experiential work and academic work to obtain an Antioch International BA. Whereas the MA programme specializes only in humanistic psychology, the BA completion programme will provide the more generalized liberal arts approach common to American Universities, with a concentration available in humanistic psychology for those electing psychology as a major. Here too students will meet with the course leader, Dr Steven Gans, and map out their own individualized degree plan along the broad outlines established on the home campus in Yellow Springs, Ohio. On-going work at Quaesitor and other experiential learning centres will count towards the degree, as will placements in social services agencies and other work situations. At Antioch, Dr Miller, Dr Gans, and others will provide undergraduate classes for students interested in psychology. The BA completion programme aims to attract people who have started university and then interrupted their studies; however school leavers with 'A' levels may also prove to be eligible as generally American colleges and universities consider 'A' level equivalent to the first year of the standard four-year American degree.

In both MA and BA programme, the high fees which Antioch charges may prove to be a deterrent, not to say, an insuperable problem. However, the MA programme has a