THE UNIVERSITIES—III

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The limitations of this paper should be made clear at the start. It represents an attempt to bring together the statistics relating to university education in this part of the country and to examine how far they have changed in the last twenty-five years. Apart from the tables published in the annual Statistical Abstract, no figures for all the institutions are generally available; and it is hoped that their collocation may be of some service. It must be confessed that the paper lags far behind the model provided by the reports of the University Grants Committee in Great Britain; but its scope must necessarily be more limited. Not all the ground can be covered; and one can only hope that no essential point has been left unsurveyed. Few activities lend themselves less easily to statistical treatment than university education; and it cannot be claimed that this paper goes further than providing a basis for discussion and, perhaps, a starting point for further inquiry.

Very suitably, this paper appears at the end of a session in which two of the foundations surveyed commemorated the centenary of their opening to students. There is, of course, a third institution of equal age, the Queen's University of Belfast, whose activities have regretfully been excluded from its scope. There are limits to the length of any paper read before this Society—and to the size of its tables; and the inclusion of Queen's would have meant a disproportionate expansion in both length and size. Here and there in the text, some figures are given, from which it would appear that in many ways the history of Queen's since 1908 runs parallel to the experiences of universities here. In other, and happier, respects there is a notable divergence. It is a pity that so prosperous a development of vitality and service should be excluded from these pages.

The history of university education in this country may be recapitulated very briefly. The earliest foundation is that of the University of Dublin in 1591. Originally, students could enter it freely; although the obligation to take the oath prescribed by the Act of Supremacy prevented Catholics or Presbyterians from taking a degree. Their attendance became practically impossible after a revision of the statutes in 1637. These disabilities remained until the Relief Act of 1793; but non-Episcopalians remained ineligible to become members of the corporation of Trinity College, the University's only college as things had turned out, until Fawcett's Act (36 Vic, cap. 21) in 1874. Thirty years before in 1845, the Colleges (Ireland) Act (8 & 9 Vic. cap. 66) had provided for the establishment of colleges at Cork, Belfast and Galway. These colleges, as colleges of the Queen's University in Ireland, opened their doors in the session 1849–50; but they met with limited success. The majority of the nation, unwilling to attend either the new or the old foundation, attempted to start its own University. The result was the Catholic University in Dublin, with which the name of Newman is imperishably associated. This institution, however, received no legal recognition and remained without the power to confer degrees.

In 1879, the University Education (Ireland) Act (42 & 43 Vic., cap. 65) set up the Royal University of Ireland in place of the Queen's University. The new University was purely an examining body without a teaching staff. The Queen's colleges were left untouched except for small matters consequent on the change of University. Finally, in 1908, the Irish Universities Act (8 Edw. VII cap. 38) made a fresh attempt to solve an intractable problem. This Act repealed its predecessors of 1845 and 1879. The University of Dublin was not affected. The Royal University was dissolved and the Queen's Colleges were regrouped. Queen's College, Belfast, became the Queen's University of Belfast. The Cork and Galway Colleges were brought, with a new college set up by the Act in Dublin, into the new foundation of the National University of Ireland. The new College in Dublin derived largely from the schools of Arts and Medicine set up under the Catholic University.

The session 1909–10 was the first full year under the new arrangements. In that year, the total number of students attending at Dublin University and at the National University was 2,254. There was an increase to 2,751 in 1912–13, the pre-war peak. The numbers fell away by some hundreds in the next few years; but by 1917–18 they had all but made good the loss. The next few years saw a marked increase, the numbers reaching 3,658 in 1920–21. Another period of contraction followed; the lowest point being reached in 1926–27, when there were 3,037 students. It will be noted that this was well above the pre-war level. After that year, a steady expansion began. Its course may be judged from the following table in which the number of the teaching staffs have also been included.

TABLE I.

Numbers of all students and of teaching staff in some Sessions, 1928–29 to 1947–8.

	Students	Staff		Students	Staff
1928–29 ...	3,532	372	1945–46 ...	6,664	526
1930–31 ...	4,311	385	1946–47 ...	7,114	538
1935–36 ...	5,011	414	1947–48 ...	7,253	
1938–39 ...	5,370	461			

These figures purport to include all students, full-time and part-time; but it is not certain that the distinction has been always observed. It is probable that the number of part-time students was not very great in the earlier years. It has certainly grown rapidly in the last twenty years on account of the institution of a number of courses for which diplomas or other awards are given. This increase has led to heavier demands on the limited numbers of staff and on the still more limited resources of lecture rooms and equipment. It does not seem that the extension of university courses is yet ended; but this raises controversial points that are irrelevant to the present inquiry. Before passing from this matter, it is well to mention that the inclusion of part-time students conceals the fact that the expansion in the numbers of full-time students was checked in the last year under review. In 1945–46 there were 6,468 full-time students; there were 6,853 in 1946–47 and 6,823 in 1947–48.[1]

[1] The number of students in the Queen's University grew from 1,225 in 1926–27 to about 2,700 in 1948–49.

The increase in the number of students in the last twenty-five years was not unvarying in pace nor was it equally shared. The following table shows the number of full-time students in the four university institutions surveyed.

TABLE II.

Number of full-time students in some Sessions, 1925–26 to 1947–48.

	1925–26	1930–31	1935–36	1938–39	1945–46	1946–47	1947–48
Dublin Univ. ...	1,174	1,455	1,467	1,488	1,588	1,836	2,020
U. C. Cork ...	534	617	893	942	1,084	1,085	1,046
U. C. Galway ...	242	555	596	669	757	739	746
U. C. Dublin ...	1,105	1,542	1,876	2,121	3,039	3,193	3,011

It will be noticed that this increase has been all but unbroken for over twenty years. This is all the more remarkable when it is contrasted with the experience of the two preceding decades. Between 1910 and 1918, there was no great variation in the number of students; what movement there was, was downwards in the war years. The last year of the war and the years following the Armistice brought an increase which gradually disappeared again as the entrants of 1918 and 1919 finished their courses. Even at the lowest level, in 1926–27, the number of students compared favourably with the pre-war number; but it has been shown to be subject to fluctuation. In that period there was nothing similar to the steady growth of the last two decades.

This provides a strong contrast with the experience of British universities. In the United Kingdom, it is possible to trace the influence of changing economic conditions on the number of students. In one of their reports, the University Grants Committee point out that numbers increased in times of trade depression and tended to fall in times of prosperity. That is perhaps a phenomenon that may not be repeated in the altered conditions of British society. But not even the most far-fetched correlation can be attempted with the Irish figures. The earlier years of the increase were years of prosperity that led into the Great Depression and the Economic War. Later still came the rising prices, by no means necessarily advantageous to parents of children at a university, of war-time. Throughout all these vicissitudes, the number of students increased rapidly.

It would be bold, then, to guess at the future course of university statistics. We can only record that, apart from the ebbing of the post-war flood, there seems no reason why numbers should significantly decrease. It would appear that sacrifices for the education of children are readily accepted; more generally accepted, perhaps, than they used to be. Otherwise, how can we explain an increase in years of intense agricultural depression and, more recently, a further increase in face of the rising costs of university education?

There are some pointers. The establishment of the Irish State has greatly increased the opportunities to those who receive a university education. The institution and expansion of State services and State-owned bodies has widened the demand. In agriculture as in industry, development calls for the employment of an increasing degree of judgment and skill. It is probable indeed that the community does not yet make full use of its resources in this regard; if it comes to do so,

progress will call for a greatly increased employment of graduates in the more technical fields. Without accepting the implications of estimates of scientific man-power on the lines of the Barlow Report, it seems a pity that there has never been an enquiry into the number of " technicians " who are needed in industry or in agriculture. Such an enquiry might well prove to be of the greatest value to the community.

The proportion of women students seems to show some variations.

TABLE III.

Proportion of men and women students. 1938–39 *and* 1947–48.

	1938–39		1947–48	
	M. %	F. %	M. %	F. %
Dublin Univ.	77·7	22·3	69·9	30·1
U. C. Cork	69·6	30·4	67·7	32·3
U. C. Galway	70·7	29·3	68·2	31·8
U. C. Dublin	75·6	24·4	75·0	25·0

In English Universities, the proportion of men fell in those years from 78 per cent. to 75 per cent. In Scotland and Wales, it remained about constant at 73 per cent. The figure for the two Irish universities in sum fell from 74·7 per cent. in 1938–39 to 71·6 per cent. in 1947–48.

A similar table may be included here to show the age distribution of students at entry. Here again, there are some contrasts ; but the numbers involved are not so great that any conclusion can be safely drawn.

TABLE IV.

Age distribution of students at first entry. 1947–48.

	under 17	17–18	18–19	19–
	%	%	%	%
English Universities ...	*	5·9	24·4	69·7
Scottish Universities ...	*	14·0	30·5	55·5
Welsh Universities ...	*	15·3	25·3	59·4
Dublin University ...	7·7	26·3	21·2	44·8
U. C. Cork	*	16·2	21·9	61·9
U. C. Galway	*	10·4	26·9	62·7
U. C. Dublin	*	20·1	45·2	34·7

*Insignificant.

There are considerable differences in the extent of the area from which each institution draws its students. In Cork, in 1947–48, 53 per cent. of the students came from the city or from within a radius of 30 miles and 47 per cent. from outside that area. In Galway, the proportions were 50·8 per cent. and 49·2 per cent. In University College, Dublin, 32·1 per cent. came from the city or from the area within 30 miles of it ; 66·5 per cent. came from other parts of Ireland or from Great Britain ; and 1·4 per cent. came from abroad. Figures for Dublin University cannot be exactly given ; but a fair breakdown would probably be about 34 per cent. from Dublin and within 30 miles of Dublin ; 60 per cent. from the rest of Ireland and Great Britain and 6 per cent. from abroad.

In general these figures represent the growing centralisation of the State; in particular, they reflect the fact that professional courses in architecture, mechanical and electrical engineering and, after a point, law can be pursued only in Dublin.

The form of University residence appears from the next table:

TABLE V.

Place of university residence, 1947–48.

	At home and in lodgings	At home	In lodgings	In College or Hostel
	%	%	%	%
Dublin Univ. ...	78	—	—	22
U. C. Cork ...	—	54	39	7
U. C. Galway ...	—	25·5	57·7	16·8
U. C. Dublin ...	—	39	52	9

These figures are not strictly comparable; as the Dublin and Cork returns are for lay students only. They show very plainly the great lack of accommodation for students within their college. Dublin University is, strictly speaking, the only institution that possesses rooms within the College. Lack of money has always prevented any approach to solving this matter; but there will be more to say on that hereafter.

The next table is of more general importance.

TABLE VI.

Distribution of full-time students by Faculty.

	1929–30	1938–39	1947–48
U. C. Cork	%	%	%
Arts	42·3	29·8	22·3
Science	16·7	11·7	14·9
Law	2.0	·6	·8
Medicine & Dentistry	22·3	35·5	37·4
Engineering & Architecture	7·3	9·3	8·4
Commerce	7.0	6·7	9·5
Agriculture & Dairy Science ...	2·4	6·4	6·7
U. C. Galway			
Arts	38 0	37·0	27·0
Science	10·5	8.8	13·1
Law	2·0	1·5	·3
Medicine & Dentistry	12 0	25·2	33·0
Engineering & Architecture ...	9·2	15·3	15·8
Commerce	28·3	12·2	8·4
Agriculture	—	—	2·4
U. C. Dublin			
Arts	51·3	32·8	31·5
Science	9·2	8·3	9·0
Law	1·5	2·6	·5
Medicine & Dentistry	17·5	31·6	32·5
Engineering & Architecture	6·2	12·2	14·9
Commerce	12·8	8 4	5·0
Agriculture	1·5	4·1	4·9
Veterinary Science	—	—	1·7

Similar comparisons cannot be made for Dublin University with its universal Arts degree. The following figures, however, suggest that the trend there was roughly the same. The numbers taking Medicine were 340 in 1929–30, 543 in 1938–39 and 535 in 1947–48. Engineering rose in the same years from 52 to 63 and thence to 130. The total number of students in those years was 1,357, 1,488 and 2,020 respectively.[2]

The demand for engineers and doctors has increased at home; but it remains true that for many of them the main field of employment lies outside this country. It may therefore be argued that the maintenance of their numbers will depend on the course of events abroad. It may happen that social and economic changes in Great Britain, for example, will permanently increase the number of doctors and engineers produced by the universities there; or it may happen that a comparable change in outlook will turn the minds of Irish parents towards commerce and agriculture. Developments such as these may emerge; but from their nature they will progress slowly. In sum, there does not appear to be any convincing reason why the trend revealed by this table should not continue. One precedent, however, that points in the opposite direction should be quoted. The post-war boom of 1918–20 brought many students to the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering; and their numbers soon decreased. But a post-war boom is a less substantial trend than one that has continued for twenty years of peace, of war and of peace again.[3] In the meantime, university authorities may reflect on the growing importance of branches of study that are expensive to maintain and that need costly equipment. What seems in retrospect to have been the financial ease of universities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was due as much to small expenses as to large incomes.

The last table raises another point that has received such attention that it cannot be passed over even in a cursory study such as this. The Irish universities, it is too often said, encourage emigration by educating engineers and doctors who are bound to emigrate after graduation.[4] Moreover, it is said, so long as this state of affairs lasts, the universities cannot expect the community to assist them on any substantial scale. Any money that the State provides should be given for the benefit of this country; it should not be devoted to supplying skilled graduates to other nations. Such criticisms are so persistently, sometimes so authoritatively, made that they cannot be ignored.

The first point can be answered quickly enough. It would be impossible from every point of view for a university to accept students only on condition that they did not emigrate after graduation. The proposition has only to be stated for its absurdity to be perceived. By law or by the

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[2] The totals for Dublin University include all students whose names are on the books. The number of actual students may therefore be over-estimated.

[3] It is possible that the trend is exaggerated by these figures in so far as students increasingly enter the professions through the universities rather than through non-university schools. In some professions it seems as if the numbers entering in the 1860's and 1870's were greater than they have been more recently. Of course, the population was larger then; but it was also poorer. Set against a longer perspective, the trend to the professions, or to some of them, may appear less marked than it does in Table VI.

[4] It is not impossible that a full investigation would show that the inevitability of emigration is greatly exaggerated. In some branches, graduates go abroad for experience and then return: in others they return after so many years' practice. Much of our electrical and industrial development would have been impossible had not some graduates obtained fuller experience abroad.

decision of the governing body of a profession, a university is empowered to grant degrees that carry the right of practising in the professions. It cannot discriminate between one student and another on the ground that one will practice at home and the other abroad ; to do so would be a serious breach of trust, and of contract. It is difficult to see how less drastic steps could remedy matters. It is difficult to see how a university or any of its officers, could accept the tremendous responsibility of advising young students to adopt only those careers which might appear, and so mistakenly, to be most likely to keep them at home.[5]

The second point is more important because at first sight it may seem unreasonable that the State should contribute to the education of graduates who will give their work to other countries. But closer examination will reveal that matters stand otherwise. The critics will agree that, whatever happens, a certain number of doctors and engineers (to confine discussion to the faculties most often mentioned in this respect) must be educated each year to meet the needs of this country. In any case, therefore, the universities must maintain their staffs and provide equipment. Their expenses will not be reduced by any reduction in the number of students. Indeed the cost of university education, both to the university and to the student, would almost certainly be increased if such a reduction were to take place. The last table shows how great a proportion of students pay their fees for courses in medicine and engineering ; and a later table will show how greatly the universities depend on fees for their income. A fall in receipts would make a further increase in fees quite inevitable. The fact is that the student who emigrates makes unversity education cheaper for the student who stops at home. To adopt an analogy that is apt, if displeasing, the overheads have to be provided in any case ; and they can be better maintained if they are fully used.

This is surely an issue that is wider than university education alone. Human personality cannot be valued at so many pounds a head ; the worth of emigrants cannot be carried into the balance of payments. It is surely to the national interest that our emigrants should be well equipped for whatever occupation they may go to ; that the Irish abroad should not be forced into the lowest level of every occupation. No one would dream of contending that primary education should be restricted because so great a proportion of those who receive it eventually emigrate : it is difficult to understand why such proposals should be made about university education. The error in the criticism surely lies in applying economic values to matters that cannot be so measured. But this is not the place to pursue the matter.[6]

It has not been possible to expand staffs to anything like the extent that is now necessary. It will appear from Table 1 that the universities have attempted to keep pace with developments but the persistence of the undergraduate increase has defeated their efforts. It is arbitrary procedure to place the number of staff against the number of students ;

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[5] Advice to students can be a tricky business. Any prospective engineer presenting himself, for example, between 1930 and 1933 might well have been advised to choose some other career. But, as things turned out, he should not have lacked employment from the time he graduated to the present day.

[6] It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that the State could not have been governed nor its resources developed, in so far as they have been, had it not been for the supply of trained graduates from universities.

but the result will give at least a rough measure of the problem. In 1909–10, the ratio of staff to students was 1 to 9·7; at the lowest point of the post-war decline, it was 1 to 9·5. In 1938–39 it was 1 to 11·6 and by 1946–47 it had gone to 1 to 12·7. These figures relate to all staff, full-time or part-time and to full-time students only; thus, the true position is a good deal worse than appears from Table VII.

TABLE VII.

Ratio of numbers of staff to numbers of students in British Universities, 1947-48 and in Irish Universities, 1946-47.

	Professors & Fellows	Lecturers, Assistants etc.	Total Staff	Total Students	Ratio
English Universities ...	832	4,100	4,932	58,301	1 to 11·8
Scottish Universities ...	159	973	1,132	15,444	1 to 13·6
Welsh Universities ...	88	379	467	4,762	1 to 10·2
Irish Universities ...	184	354	538	6,853	1 to 12·7
Dublin University ...	59	100	159	1,836	1 to 11·5
U. C. Cork	38	57	95	1,085	1 to 11·4
U. C. Galway	26	59	85	739	1 to 8·7
U. C. Dublin	61	138	199	3,193	1 to 16·0

In Queen's University the proportion appears to be 1 to 12·5. It is hardly necessary to say that the Irish universities do not engage more staff because they could not pay them. They can only gaze enviously across the Border or across the Irish Sea where, even in the midst of unparallelled expansion, the problem of under-staffing is being overcome. One example may suffice; it is a quotation from a speech of Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, reported in the *Manchester Guardian* of November 17, 1949. "Five years ago," he said, "the Manchester medical faculty (excluding dentistry) cost about £58,000 a year; in 1948–49 the figure was £174,060, including some generous grants from the Nuffield Foundation. The number of students had increased by 20 per cent. and the staff by 84 per cent. The improvement in the staff-student ratio from 7·1 before the war to 5·1 represented a great national effort to raise standards in medical teaching and research. . . . At Manchester . . . the number of science students increased by 168 per cent., and the staff by 80 per cent., the student-staff ratio falling from its pre-war level of 7 : 1 to 10 : 1. In the humanities the number of students had increased over pre-war numbers by 134 per cent. and the staff by 65 per cent., the student-staff ratio deteriorating from $7\frac{1}{2}$: 1 to 1 : 1."

This brings us to the question of university finance. It will be seen that the two main sources of income are fees and State grants. Endowments are almost completely lacking among the colleges of the National University. In the following table, the main heads of revenue in the year 1947–48 have been set out. By way of comparison, the corresponding figures for British universities of comparable size, have been added. It should be said that the sums received from the Department of Agriculture have been omitted. They are ear-marked for particular purposes and, in the phrase that appears in the annual Estimates, "they may abate if the Minister thinks fit."

TABLE VIII.

University Revenues.

	Students	Endowments £000	Donations £000	Local Auths. £000	Parlmty Grants £000	Fees £000	Other £000	Total £000
Dublin University	2,020	66.3	—	—	37·2	76·8	3·9	187·2
U. C. Cork	1,046	1·2	—	·1	60·5	27·8	3·2	92·8
Aberystwyth	1,144	6·2	—	·7	151·8	27·4	5·4	191·5
U. C. Galway	746	—	—	1.5	52·9	16·8	n.a.	71·2
Southampton	899	1·3	n.a.	15·6	98·5	29·1	·8	145·3
U. C. Dublin	3,011	·4	—	—	122·5	79·7	1·1	203·7
Birmingham	3,012	45·1	21·8	34·1	404·7	139·1	9·3	654·1

NOTES:—The figures for the Irish colleges are not altogether complete but they cover over 95 per cent. of income.

In this year, non-recurrent grants were made as follows:—Southampton, £85,860; Birmingham, £163,450.

Contrasts, no doubt, can be pushed too far: and State aid on the British scale may create its own problems. But the table shows how very greatly our universities now lag behind. The lag will become still more pronounced. The British estimates contain the following provision for 1949–50 and 1950–51. In the first year recurrent grants were to be £13,728,500 and non-recurrent grants £4,750,000. In the current year recurrent grants are to be £15,644,500 and non-recurrent grants £8,877,000. The non-recurrent grant covers the building programme that began some years ago.

A more reasonable comparison may be drawn from the proportion that the provision for universities bears to the national income and budget of Great Britain and of Ireland. In 1949, the British national income was returned at £10,226 millions: the Budget was £3,870 millions. Provision for universities at £24,321,500 represents ·6 per cent. of the total Budget and ·2 per cent. of national income. In Ireland, provision for universities in the current estimates is £277,600. This does not include £68,500 which is provided for purposes designated by the State. The bulk of this total is made up of £37,476, to University College, Dublin, and £19,500 to University College, Cork, from the Department of Agriculture, which is "subject to the conditions stipulated by the Minister for Agriculture." National income was returned at £350 million in 1949 and the non-capital budget for 1950–51 totalled £75,700,000. We find therefore that in Ireland the provision for universities formed ·4 per cent. of the budget and ·08 per cent. of the national income.

The conclusion, then, must be that the universities find themselves in a position where they are faced with rising costs on one side and with demands for increased service on the other. Their position can be set right either by increasing their fees or by the receipt of larger grants. University fees have been raised considerably in recent years; and it will be agreed that a further advance would be most undesirable. It is true that the past increases have not arrested the flow of students; but they have certainly made it more difficult for many parents to send their children to a university. A university course to-day cannot be achieved by anyone below a certain standard of income. In passing, mention should be made of the very few and small scholarships that are available in this country. In the three colleges of the National University

there were 4,803 students in 1947–48. Of these, only 315 held scholarships from external bodies. Against that position may be put the British figures, which show that in the same year 72 per cent. of students in English universities were in receipt of assistance. The proportion in Wales was 78 per cent. and in Scotland 63 per cent. The proportion at Oxford was 80 per cent., and at Cambridge 77·7 per cent. These figures reflect to some extent the grants made to ex-servicemen. It is, however, the declared policy of the State to provide assistance freely to students. It has been decided that scholarships will be made available to about 11,000 of the 18,000 students who enter English and Welsh universities each year. This is a permanent plan.

It is fairly clear that Irish universities can provide neither the tuition nor the equipment nor the scholarships that are necessary. That flows from their lack of income. The paper may close with one further comparison that shows the amount of income from all sources related to the number of students in each university. In Great Britain in 1947–48, income per student ran as follows: in Reading (965 students), £308; Birmingham (3,012 students), £218; Liverpool (3,105 students), £200; Aberdeen (2,013 students), £170; Abersytwyth (1,136 students), £175. It is useful to compare the Irish figures which are, like the British, calculated for full-time students only. In addition, as the grant from the Department of Agriculture has not been reckoned as revenue, the agricultural students in Cork and Dublin have been excluded. On that basis we find University College, Cork (982 students), with an income of £94 per student; University College, Galway (746 students), with an income of £95 per student; University College, Dublin (2,870 students), with an income of £71 per student and Dublin University (2,020 students), almost £93 a student.

So much could be written on these figures. But the aim of this paper is to set out the facts rather than to state a case; and it is most fortunate that it can be concluded by recording that the Budget speech some weeks ago intimated the intention of the Minister of Finance to inquire into the position of the universities.[7]

DISCUSSION.

Professor Johnston said there has never in recent times been an "economic" demand for University education in the sense that the payments obtainable from students would have been enough to meet the whole cost of such education. Such payments in the case of the older Universities were supplemented by investment income—the proceeds of endowments and benefactions of private or public origin. In the case of the newer Universities the State has always and necessarily admitted the obligation to supplement them from the public Exchequer.

In return University education has conferred valuable benefits on the community, cultural and material—tangible and intangible.

It is not the fault of our Universities if so many graduates must be exported. Even the State does not claim the right to determine

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[7] I must thank the authorities of the universities and colleges concerned for permission to use the figures shown in this paper. I am especially grateful for the kindness with which Registrars and their staffs answered enquiries for statistics of previous years. Any comment made is wholly on my own responsibility.

where or at what one shall work, or to forbid emigration. As industry has developed additional openings have been found for our graduates at home—notably in the Electricity Supply Board and the Beet Sugar factories. If the national agriculture were organised to the extent it should be it, too, would provide enlarged scope for the employment of graduates.

In recent years the great increase of academic salaries in Britain has widened by hundreds of pounds annually the margin between academic salaries here and in the United Kingdom. The superior attractions of life in Ireland make a small financial margin tolerable, but the great widening of recent years, plus the payment of liberal children's bonuses, have acted as a powerful magnet attracting away some of our best professors and lecturers, and conversely making it difficult to get a good field of candidates for new appointments here.

If we want to keep up the high standards of our Universities and, indeed, to prevent what might become a disastrous hæmorrhage of first class talent, the State must increase substantially the subsidies provided for University education.

Professor McCarthy, in seconding the vote of thanks, said that the lecturer was doing a real service to the universities in giving publicity to the difficulties which had arisen within and were seldom heard of without the walls of the academic institutions.

He (Professor McCarthy) would like to see a more detailed analysis of the numbers of university students than had been given in the paper, for the change in the global total were the resultant of many different causes. For instance the trends in the totals for the National University and for Trinity College were quite different, the former increasing steadily so that the number in 1947-48 was about two and a half times that twenty years earlier, and the latter remaining practically stationary until the end of the last war, after which it jumped by about one-third. Analysis of the total by faculties would help. In University College, Cork, the whole increase during the first World War and the subsequent decrease was due entirely to changes in the numbers of medical students, and this presumably was caused by the increased demand for medical practitioners in Great Britain just as much as by any economic changes here.

As regards the last twenty-five years a variety of reasons for the increase could be given: (i) the lengthening of the medical curriculum; (ii) the big increase in the numbers of religious orders attending the universities to qualify as teachers or doctors either at home or on the Missions; (iii) the establishment of new faculties (Dairy Science in University College, Cork) and the provision of evening courses; (iv) war-time increase in medicals, etc. These and other factors as well as the effect of the general economic situation and the increased demand for technical and university qualifications mentioned by the lecturer affected the numbers, and a much expanded treatment would be necessary to examine the situation fully.

It would be very interesting also to pursue further the question of the place of domicile of university students and to discover how many from outside this country were being provided with their education here, as well as to relate the number of students from various areas within the country to the appropriate populations. An attempt to carry out such a calculation for the National

University for 1944-45 showed that the percentage of university students in the relevant age-group was highest in the south and west of the country. The Dublin proportion was not as high as might be expected, and the proportions in the midland counties, Kildare, Laoighis, Meath, etc., was relatively very low. It is interesting to speculate why this should be so.

A further point which is often overlooked in the interpretation of figures such as those in Table VI, dealing with the distribution of students between faculties, is that the normal length of the course for different degrees is quite different—for Science it is three years in University College, Cork, and for Medicine six years, including the pre-medical year. Thus in the group of graduating students in any year, the ratio of medicals to science students will be only half the corresponding ratio in the total population of students.

The main problem facing the Colleges of the National University, and probably also Trinity College, is undoubtedly that of finance, aggravated particularly in the case of University College, Dublin, by the necessity for a very large capital outlay to provide adequate buildings and equipment to deal with its 3,000 students. From the shortage of money there flows a large variety of other difficulties; poorly paid professors, which means eventually a decline in the standard of applicants for these posts, and all the evils that will bring in its train; worse paid assistants and lecturers, who in some cases have neither a living wage nor security of tenure, and are obliged to earn money in outside avocations, often to the detriment of their academic work; ill-equipped laboratories and understaffing, so that university teachers are overburdened by too much teaching and have no time for the essential business of research and so on.

Relative to other work of the same quality in the professions, in the Civil Service or elsewhere, university professors are badly underpaid. It is alleged that there are compensating features in holding a University Chair, and this would be true were the Irish universities adequately staffed; but the staff often have so much teaching to do, especially in the smaller colleges, that they have not the leisure for their own work, which should be the greatest attraction of this type of post.

Not only are the Professorships unattractive, but the conditions of the junior posts are relatively even worse. And to make matters still worse, though the number of university teachers has increased in this country by about one-third in the past twenty years, this increase has occurred almost entirely in the lower paid jobs. Professors and Fellows are less than ten per cent. more numerous than at the beginning of the period, while Lecturers, Assistants, etc., have doubled in number. That of course means that there are a large number of the junior university staff in what are in effect blind-alley jobs.

The only remedy seems to be the provision of adequate financial support by the State—a support that may be too dearly bought at the price of freedom. Money given to the universities is money well spent, especially any money in excess of what is required for the normal teaching duties of the institutions. It is this little extra which, by enabling research to be carried out, will not only improve the whole spirit of the university, but is bound to give a

good economic return to the State in output either of fundamental or of applied research.

Mr. Meenan expressed his gratitude to the speakers on the vote of thanks. The scope of the paper had been necessarily limited as it was, in a sense, an interim report on the progress of a more ample study that he hoped to complete shortly. It should be read with its two predecessors in which a number of the points raised by speakers had been considered if not, perhaps, so fully as one would wish.