

Thousands leaving education face the stark choice—the youth opportunities scheme, the services, or the dole queue

Slump bars son from family path

Surrounded by cutbacks and redundancies, school leavers in a Welsh steel town are left with few options. Paul Hoyland reports

UNLIKE many of his counterparts, Graham Meacham has always known where he wanted to work. He can see the place in question quite clearly from his classroom window.

His father worked there for more than 30 years and his elder brother now works on the site. But 16-year-old Graham cannot follow in their footsteps.

His ambition has been thwarted by the recession that has knocked the heart out of his town's pride and joy, the steelworks that put Port Talbot on the map, which are now fighting for survival.

Graham's generation of school leavers are faced with stark options in the west Glamorgan steel mecca. Jobs are scarce and with each vacancy attracting dozens of applicants, more and more youngsters are choosing to stay on at school, many reluctantly, in the hope of gaining more qualifications to assist them in what is becoming a gruelling hunt for work.

comprehensive school. The employment problems confronting the open school, which stands directly opposite the steel plant, typify those faced by the town's school leavers.

Mr Bowen said: "BSC has taken on only about 30 apprentices at Port Talbot this year, compared with about 100 in previous years. The applicants come from a very large area and there's great competition. What's much worse is that the ripple effect of the steel rundown is cutting apprenticeships and jobs in all the local support industries, such as engineering."

Of the 125 boys who made up the Dyffryn fifth form, 53 have not yet got a job, planned further education, or returned to school. Only 49 have definitely obtained employment or have courses lined up. Big local employers such as Metal Box and BP have radically limited their intake of apprentices.

It is anyone's guess as to whether their plight is the result of their own fault. The Prime Minister who is the villain of the piece. "It's Maggie's fault. She's making all this unemployment," said Graham, who has recently been made redundant at the steel works.

Mr David Williams, second deputy head at Dyffryn, said: "In Port Talbot we're talking about families where everyone has worked in the steelworks and youngsters were only waiting to go into steel to join their fathers. With redundancies all around us, if something isn't done in the next few weeks, we're going to have another Rhondda situation with the more able people leaving the district."

To combat the growing youth unemployment, the district careers officer, Mr John Talbot, is channelling teenagers into the Youth Opportunities Programme.

There are 250 places providing work experience with a wage of £23.50 each. Nearly 70 per cent of last year's intake found CSEs within the programme.

"Unless the school leavers has four or five O-levels, the future is in the Youth Opportunities Programme for the vast majority," said Mr Talbot. "Ten per cent of 50 per cent of youngsters chasing 50 per cent of jobs in Port Talbot this year."



Class of '80: facing the dole

TOMORROW'S unemployment figures will show that an extra 100,000 school-leavers have joined the dole queue in the past month and that the total number of people out of work has risen by 20 per cent since May. In the North-east, Northern Ireland, and other black spots the problem is not new, but it is now spreading to parts of the country which in the past have largely escaped.

Struggling against Liverpool's unemployment tide

LIVERPOOL'S education and careers staff dig hard for jobs for youngsters, but hundreds of the 9,000 children leaving school this year have none to go to.

Alan Dunn on how a Liverpool school comes to terms with its narrowing options

show exactly what the future holds, but all the fifth form are invited back in September to discuss the experience and what they have decided.

An average comprehensive with a distinct edge in the hunt for jobs

SOUTHFIELDS school in south London is an average modern comprehensive. Its Wandsworth-Wimbledon catchment area includes inner city council estates as well as middle class suburbs.

Penny Chorlton finds a successful job scheme in a typical London comprehensive

form coordinator, said: "I don't know of any boys who haven't found jobs, but there are four girls who aren't doing anything as far as I know."

Oxford Class List

- The following Class Lists have been issued:
EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
Class I — Sara J. Carr, St. Anne, Rec-chey, Notts; ...
BACHELOR OF CIVIL LAW
Class I — W. P. Forster, CCC, Oakham S (Psychol and Phil); ...
MODERN HISTORY AND MODERN LANGUAGES
Class I — T. M. Kuhn, St. J. New-castle-on-Tyne; ...

Exhibition challenges the Church

The debate about women's ordination will continue its revival this week through the medium of an art exhibition at Manchester Cathedral.

Twelve are saved as ship sinks

TWELVE people were rescued from the sea off Anglesey last night after a 30-foot fishing vessel sank when it was hit by a freak wave.

Fears, too, for the privately educated

Dennis Johnson in an area of privilege

THE CONTRAST between school leavers at a large comprehensive school in an industrial area and those at one of Britain's best known public schools is almost total.

All but a tiny minority of the 180 or so who left Marlborough College, Wiltshire, when term ended last week-end, had a pretty clear idea of their immediate future, and it did not include enforced unemployment.

It seemed likely that fewer than a dozen faced real uncertainties, and even they were thought by masters to include a high proportion whose unemployment would be voluntary.

For the year just ended, the fees at Marlborough, which has 950 pupils, were £285 a term, and parents have already been told to expect an increase for next year.

Even without the prestigious background of a career at Marlborough, that gave them an immediate edge in the market, more particularly as the product of a reputable public school, it assured them of a place in the universities or in professional training schemes.

Shake-up to end NUS cash crisis is approved

By Wendy Berliner Education Staff
The executive of the National Union of Students yesterday approved major reorganisation designed to save the union from financial disaster and focus its work more sharply on student matters.