

I N T R O D U C T I O N

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After a period of unprecedented expansion the higher education system is now experiencing a condition resembling the economic recession being felt by society at large. Funds are being tightly controlled, enrolments have levelled off, building programmes are at a standstill, and staff recruitment has been sharply curtailed. For most academics this is a novel and somewhat bewildering situation: most of those who attended the 1977 conference had grown up professionally in what appeared at the time to be a period of endless institutional and system growth. This period has now come to an abrupt end and the implications for the academic community of this unpalatable fact will be profound and far-reaching although unfortunately they have yet to be fully grasped and have certainly not received the wide and serious discussion which they merit.

It was therefore decided that the 1977 HERDSA conference should be centred around discussion of the theme "Higher education in a steady state" in order to examine some of the implications for the universities and colleges of advanced education of the virtual cessation of the very rapid growth in both funding and enrolments which have taken place since World War II. Professor Karmel spoke to the theme in giving the opening address of the conference. Our other guest speaker, Professor Wheelwright, was invited to speak on a topic of his own choosing.

Four other speakers contributed to a symposium on "The future of higher education".* The remainder of the conference was devoted to workshop and study group activities: reports from three of the study groups are included in these Proceedings.

This is the first occasion on which the Society has published its conference Proceedings: in view of the importance of the conference theme the Executive felt that the contributions should be made available to a wider audience in order to stimulate further discussion.

On behalf of the Society I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the speakers for helping to make the 1977 conference such a success. Thanks are also due to Ian Dunn for making tape-recordings of the presentations, to Annie Williams for producing transcripts and the final typescript, and to Joan Binks for undertaking the printing.

* Dr. W.C. Hall was a contributor to the symposium but his paper was not available for publication.