

Dear Monday Morning People,

I hope you had a good week-end, and, Ca■■■■, not too much rice! How was your trip to the West Country, Ce■■?

This morning I hope we will be able to interview a lady at the Students Union, up on the UKC campus. Have you been up there and wandered across the campus? Marvellous views out over the city and the gentle, orchard-covered hills round it.

Until the early nineties something like 15-20% of 18 year-olds went on from school to university. There were 44 universities in UK.

You had Oxbridge (13th century) , the Red Brick Universities(mid-to-late 19th century) and the New Universities (planned by the Tories in the 50's and built in the 1960's). Kent, the one we are going to this morning, was in this last wave of building.

One morning in the mid 90's John Major woke up and decided that UK needed more universities. Overnight we had around 140 of them!

What he did was to upgrade a load of Polytechnics and FE colleges and gave them the title of university. Today 35 to 40% of people in the late teenage group go to "University". This makes UK statistics look much "better".

Gradually, with the pensioning off of older lecturers, the ex-Polys are turning themselves in genuine universities which basically means that now they do research as well as teaching, while before they focused uniquely on teaching.

The Thatcher period introduced an inspection system for universities- they are judged both on their ability to teach and their success in producing research findings. The

inspectors are teachers from other universities. As far as I can gather the system is both fair and fairly rigorous. And yet mutual regulation could easily become pretty mafioso.

There are a thousand more things to say about our university sector, but these lines will hopefully whet your appetite and stimulate your curiosity.



Mario.