any analysis based upon them must lead to some bizarre conclusions.

And it does. We are brought through labyrinthine ways to—at last—the book's final sentence and most important judgment: "The struggle against class rule in Uganda is not simply a struggle against the Amin dictatorship; it is principally a struggle against imperialism." That would be news in London—if anyone there was willing to pay the price of $16.50 for this book.

The Overeducated American by Richard B. Freeman

(Academic Press; 232 pp.; $12.00/$4.95)

Thomas M. Iiams

Americans accustomed to thinking of higher education as money in the bank are not going to like the message of this new book by Harvard econometrician Richard B. Freeman. College degrees, like some drug-counter nostrums, are too easily obtainable: "Knowledge is power," Freeman writes, "only if most people do not have it."

Followers of Illich have been trying to get us to see the light for years; not only are our schools costly, but most learning goes on outside them. One reason Professor Freeman's statistical analysis of the academic market place should scare the hell out of us is the endemic criminal waste of human resources tolerated by our society. The key point of Ivar Berg's *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (1970)—that workers have more education than they need—Freeman sees as only the tip of the iceberg. Those social workers and teachers who were already making less than plumbers and professional athletes ten years ago might as well resign themselves to the fact that they are never going to catch up with these better paying categories. They may miss life's little luxuries, like home delivery of the *New York Times*, but nobody ever promised them a rose garden.

In sum, graduate degrees are no longer gilt-edge investments in highly industrialized countries. As the earnings differential between white university and high school graduates dropped to one, the B.A. degree had a positive impact on higher lifetime earnings only for those minority groups singled out for affirmative action in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Meanwhile, the salaries of university graduates in the developing nations like Brazil have doubled in recent years, with young MBAs reportedly earning $25,000 at a time when the real wage of the unskilled worker has been falling. The result—although don't depend on Freeman to tell you—has been to widen still further the huge gap between an educated élite with all the perquisites and an undereducated proletariat paid a minimum wage calculated at a few percentage points under the annual rate of inflation.

In this depressed job market unemployed young Ph.D.s might consider moving to Rio de Janeiro or Kuwait, where the demand for their special skills is greater than the supply. Otherwise there is always the real world of profits and losses, where a Slavic historian might be useful to a firm doing business in an Eastern European country. Since Freeman is an economist, he purposely leaves the psychosocial implications of this type of career mutation to the reader's own judgment. What cannot be ignored, he says, is the 70 per cent drop in new jobs in American colleges and universities since 1965. Furthermore, an oversupply of Ph.D.s generally is causing a cheapening of all graduate degrees measured against what these same individuals might have been making in the time it took to earn a doctorate.

But what about the lucky ones, those who get a teaching position on the college level? Owing to institutional rigidities that guarantee lifetime employment for senior faculty—the notorious tenure system—a new faculty member on term appointment is at a competitive disadvantage: Unless an older colleague dies or resigns, the young assistant professor's chances for

advancement are negligible. Future pedagogues take note: This depressed labor market will eventually correct itself as fewer students enroll in courses leading into these low-paying fields. The current downward adjustment—or "cobweb"—should be over in four to eight years (two college generations). By then the supply of these unwanted specialists will be commensurate with demand, creating job opportunities for those fortunate enough to be graduating on the up cycle.

There are few bright spots. Biology and psychology are two, but even these two departments will experience a downturn in enrollments once the "cobweb" phenomenon hits these areas in the late seventies. By then we should also be getting less output from our older researchers, a direct consequence of the failure to hire or promote younger scholars.

Because academics are not as vital to our national economy as managers or as vital to our individual well-being as lawyers, they will receive an increasingly smaller share of the national income relative to other workers. Freeman believes "a decline in relative income on the order of 20% beyond that experienced in the early and mid-1970's" is not unrealistic. This, more than any other single factor, may drive some intellectuals to take risks in the private sector they never would have dared on campus. For either these unneeded professors find a new constituency quickly or we may have to begin stockpiling them like our agricultural surpluses.

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Briefly Noted

Mother Ireland by Edna O'Brien

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch; 144 pp.; $12.95)

Edna O'Brien's feelings toward the land of her birth are both clear and contradictory: Ireland is both a curse and—in ways she has trouble defining—a blessing. The first lines, from Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies*, set the mood:

"Let me say before I go any further that I forgive nobody. I wish them all an atrocious life and then the fires and ice of hell and in the execrable generations to come an honoured name."

In this, her first work of nonfiction, O'Brien guides us through an autobiographical journey marked by anger, resentment, irony, sadness, and, finally, a yearning to recapture the spirit of the land and people she despairs of throughout, and from it "the radical innocence of the moment just before birth."

O'Brien's gifts as a writer of fiction strengthen her treatment of fact. The facts of her childhood and early adolescence evoke for the reader a strong sense of how life *feels* in Ireland; mostly it feels "Godridden" by a religion whose insistent demands ("His passion impinged on every thought, word, deed and omission....") created a life "fervid, enclosed and catastrophic."

Influenced by a collective sense of expiation and submission, O'Brien spent part of her teenage years in a convent. She despaired, however, of its "cold corridors, accusations and severance from the hearth of life." With as much defiance as terror she set out for Dublin, hoping to find the more seductive and startling life of a film star. She found instead a place among the country's brilliant literary ancestors—Yeats, Joyce, O'Connor, and Synge.

Some years later O'Brien booked passage on a mail boat to London. "...I had to go away. That was my victory....Pity arose...for a land so often denuded, pity for a people reluctant to admit that there is anything wrong. That is why we leave. Because we beg to differ. Because we dread the psychological choke." Yet following this, in the same breathless urgency, O'Brien tells us that the land she has tried so desperately to leave behind is the land that now sustains an inner attitude; an attitude providing her with the rich sensibilities she offers her readers today.

As important as this written journey is the visual journey related through the suberbly touching photographic essay by Fergus Bourke. The photographs' low contrast tones affirm the images of O'Brien's narrative: dreary, depressing, dreading. At the same time, they are inspiring portraits of a people tied to the land, the past, and to God. It seems O'Brien felt compelled to write this saga of Ireland—its history, its culture, it personalities—out of the need to reassure herself, even now, that leaving Ireland was the thing to do. One is never quite convinced that, at least for her sake, it was.

Correspondence

[from p. 2]

labor in support of their own particular scheme for allocation.

There are those of us who resent such judgments. Since we consider ourselves the intellectual equals of those who favor universal service, we wonder why it is that their vision is more advanced than our own; we wonder what mandate they hold that gives them the moral authority to conscript our labor for their purposes; and we wonder if we lack some moral dimension that prevents us from trying to force *our* vision of society on *them*.

Sixteen years ago John Kennedy counseled the American people to "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." In such pleasantly phrased and balanced prose Kennedy summarized the appeal of universal public service, and in those days of charismatic leadership and cold war confrontation there were many of us who were swept up by the ideal of sacrifice.

But those words *were* spoken sixteen years ago—before Watergate, before the revelations of FBI and CIA wrongdoing, before we realized that we had spawned an Imperial Presidency. Today those who demand universal public ser-