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COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THEIR FUTURE

The change in the general political climate on college campuses today from a year ago is as the difference between day and night. When Ronald Reagan won the votes of 62% of those in the 18 to 24 age group, he proved what a massive and lasting effect he is having on American culture.

Reagan has not only given America a new image. He has given our young people a new self-image and outlook on life, with faith in the future and confidence that they can realize and keep the fruits of their labors.

He's given us the first generation in a long time of college men who can plan their careers without compulsory military service, or the threat of it. This extraordinary benefit is the result of having a President who is a realist about Soviet Russia and believes in carrying our "big stick" in weapons instead of in draftees.

His Reaganomics, smirked at by the media four years ago, has proven to be a success. The last two years have been the most remarkable period of new private-sector job creation in the history of the world, and the prospect of a job is the best lure to lift the hopes of college students.

But all college graduates don't get good jobs. A recent report by the Association of American Colleges shows that too many college students do not use their "academic freedom of choice" to select courses which give them a good education and prepare them for the real world. Too many waste their years on easy, dead-end, or frivolous courses.

Motivation, talent and ability come in all varieties and combinations, and fortunately money is not the primary goal of all of us. But someone ought to give college students a look at the employment picture before they squander their parents' financial sacrifices or their student loans on a college experience that has no marketable worth.

A good place to start would be the Northwestern Endicott Report for 1985. This 39th annual survey of employment trends for college graduates in business was recently released. It was compiled from data supplied by 250 corporations.

Here are the monthly salaries which the Class of 1985, graduating with Bachelor's degrees with various majors, can expect to receive, according to the Endicott charts. The first figure for each major is the minimum expected salary, and the second figure is the salary offered by the most number of companies.

Engineering: $1,400, $2,200; Chemistry: $1,600, $1,900; Computer: $1,400, $1,900; Accounting: $1,300, $1,600; Mathematics and Statistics: $1,300, $1,900; Economics and Finance: $1,100, $1,700; Sales Marketing and Business Administration: $1,100, $1,500; Liberal Arts: $1,000, $1,400.

The college majors for which there is the most demand are Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. The next most frequently mentioned majors are Mechanical Engineering, Accounting, and Mathematics.

The Endicott Report provides a convincing refutation of those who claim that the "wage gap" between men and women is due to discrimination. So far as men and women in their twenties are concerned, the alleged male/female "wage gap" is due to the fact that the higher-paying majors graduate a majority of men and the lower-paying majors graduate a majority of women.

Federal laws require the corporate recruiters to be gender-neutral in their interviewing and job offers. But they can't offer an engineering job to a graduate who majored in sociology; nor should any government agency presume to require equal salaries.

Of course, those who major in sociology or history or English or other liberal arts subjects have just as much "worth" in the sight of God and their families; and certainly money is not the only reason to choose a college major. But the students should know the consequences of their career choices, and that their "worth" in the marketplace is a compromise between what they would like to earn and what some employer is willing to pay.

The corporate recruiters surveyed by the Endicott Report were given a list of statements and asked if they agree or disagree. College students could learn a lot by noting some of the pertinent comments with which prospective employers strongly agreed.

"Students who have had work experience, i.e., co-op, internship or summer, interview better and are making better career choices.": 82%. "It is unrealistic for career counselors to tell students 'you can do anything you want to do.'": 64%.