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THE NEW YORK TIMES AND CHANGING CAMPUS TRENDS

The New York Times recently printed a very long, bleeding-heart editorial complaining about what's happening on college campuses today. It wasn't printed on the editorial page; it started on page one, so no doubt many people inferred that it was "news" when it was really opinion.

Starting with the headline "College Students Squeezed Into Career Paths," the Times shared its anguish with its readers over what is going on today. The article provides an instructive lesson in liberal attitudes.

The Times article begins by asserting that college students now "face a financial squeeze that is increasingly channeling them in a narrow, career-oriented direction." According to the Times, "it's an awful thing that students more and more have to weigh the cost of every little thing rather than think, 'is this something I want to study or to do?'" The Times reports as "news" the comment of one Ohio student who said sadly that "adolescence has been an American luxury, but we can't afford it any more."

The truth is that the fact that college students are becoming career-oriented, and are learning to make the hard choices that real life requires, is the best news that has come out of campuses in a long time. It's about time that college students learn that life requires making daily choices between what you "want" to do and how much it costs.

Whether America can afford the luxury of adolescence is irrelevant, because most college students are not adolescents and it is ridiculous to pretend they are. If they are old enough to vote, they are old enough to make choices between "wants" and costs.

The Times' next complaint is that a growing number of students must work in order to meet college costs. "The need to work and study at the same time has created stresses. It has forced many students to give up such pleasures as fraternity membership, movies and football games; fewer seem to have cars."

So what's wrong with that? The experience of paying your own way, of learning the value of a hard-earned dollar and how to budget your time, and of acquiring responsible job habits, is a much greater learning experience than college social life, entertainment,

or spectator sports. I know, because I worked 48 hours a week on the night shift (without a car) while I was carrying a full college course.

The Times' next complaint is the sharp decline in the number of students going to graduate school in the arts and sciences. The truth is that this decline shows that today's college students are smarter than those of the 1970s who spent five to ten years of their productive young lives preparing for jobs that don't exist; today there are too many Ph.D.'s looking for too few available Ph.D.-type jobs.

The Times article is so uptight about changing trends on college campuses that the author didn't seem to notice his inconsistencies. The same article complains about the drop in graduate students "who will be America's future college professors" and then admits that, "because of an oversupply of doctorates and slipping university enrollments, there are often 100 applicants for a teaching post."

The Times' next complaint is the dramatic shift away from traditional liberal arts courses to engineering and business schools. So what's wrong with that? Our country desperately needs engineers, far more than we have been producing.

The Times' next complaint is that a survey conducted at 368 colleges and universities shows that the number of this year's freshmen who say that "to make more money" is an important reason for going to college has risen from 57 percent to 67 percent. The New York Times certainly hasn't abandoned its own motive of making money out of the news.

The Times' next complaint probably comes the closest of all to revealing why the Times is so upset at changing trends on college campuses. A survey made for the American Council on Education discovered that freshmen calling themselves "conservative" have risen from 15 percent in 1971 to 24 percent today, while freshmen calling themselves "liberal" has dropped from 37 percent in 1971 to 18 percent today.

Now, that is something for the nation's most prestigious liberal newspaper to be really alarmed about! But even worse from the liberal point of view is that the financial pinch has produced a revival of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.

During the Vietnam War, the liberals were pleased that student protests required R.O.T.C. to be shut down on many campuses. The Army R.O.T.C. program, which had dropped to 33,220 in 1973, is up to 72,463 students enrolled today. No wonder the anti-defense liberal establishment is worried!