REVEALING SECRETS ABOUT COLLEGE EDUCATION

September 29, 1994 *by: Phyllis Schlafly*

A shocking secret about some of the most prestigious institutions in the United States has finally broken onto the front page of the *New York Times.* A college education no longer takes four years! According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 31 percent of college students graduate in four years or less, while 69 percent take five, six or even more years to graduate.

The cost of a year at a state university is about $7,500. Thus, a student who takes six years to get a bachelor's degree pays $15,000 more than it costs the student who graduates in four years, but the degree isn't worth a penny more.

The *Times* reported that a typical student takes only three courses a semester instead of five. We're talking about college students of traditional age, not the re-entry men and women who take college courses later in life.

The *Times* article included a picture of four roommates at California State at Long Beach who have been in college a total of 30 years. That's at least seven years each. Since the roommates were three females and one male, I suppose college was just so much fun that there just wasn't any incentive to hurry up and finish.

There would be a public outcry against the colleges IF the customer had to pay for the product. The problem is that somebody else is usually paying, either the taxpayers or the parents. Cost is not a factor in determining your college schedule if you can send the bills to someone else.

The easy availability of federal money channeled to colleges and universities has corrupted the system. A new book by George Roche, president of Hillsdale College, called "The Fall of the Ivory Tower" sets forth chapter and verse of why and how this is so. The high rate of defaults on student loans is a national scandal.

The easy flow of taxpayers' money also means that a large percentage of students are admitted to college who have no business being there at all because they are academically or emotionally unprepared. Many college freshmen must take remedial courses in English or math to learn what they should have learned in grade school.

For the past decade, students have been urged to go to college in order "to find themselves." Translated, that means enroll in a variety of easy courses until you find something you like. A student who isn't literate and mature enough, on his own, to read the course catalogue, devise a plan of study, and select the courses to achieve that goal, has no business going to college at all.

The easy availability of money to admit and keep students in college makes it possible for them to waste their education dollar on worthless courses. Here are some

examples of courses given this year at Yale University for which students can get college credit. "Gender and the Politics of Resistance: Feminism, Capitalism and the Third World." "Gender and Technology." "Feminist Perspectives on Literature." "Lesbian and Gay Theater Performance." "The Literature of AIDS." "Contemporary Lesbian and Gay Arts and Culture." "Constructing Lesbian Identities."

I wouldn't object if the students were spending their own money on such pseudo college courses. But the taxpayers' are being milked to subsidize propaganda masquerading as education.

Four years is long enough for a student of traditional age to spend in college, and I believe that three years is a better length. It took me only three years to get my bachelor's degree, and two of my children earned their bachelor's degrees from Princeton in only three years each. At present rates, that means each of those Princeton degrees cost us at least $25,000 less than what others paid.

A college degree isn't worth any more whether you take three years or eight years, but the cost differential is enormous. The out-of-pocket expense is only part of the burden.

The more destructive part of the cost is that so many young people between the ages of 18 and 25 waste so many of their prime productive hours and years. Cruising along as an undergraduate for so many years results in an artificial and unnatural deferral of maturity and of taking responsibility for your own life.

I worked a 48-hour-a-week night job while carrying a full college schedule, so it's difficult for me to understand what today's college students do with all those extra hours. In any event, it's wrong to make the taxpayers subsidize them.

I am hopeful that the day will soon come when students can stay home and take superb college courses by video from the nation's top scholars and authorities. This would greatly improve the quality of college lectures and teaching for the obvious reason that a professor being videotaped would prepare and try harder.

The rapid advances of the electronic age are already starting to make it possible for such courses to be interactive between professors and students. That's more than most students get in college now.