

Editorial

Trend in student loans has disturbing impact

The Congressional Joint Economic Committee's recent finding that more university students now are having to borrow money for their education rather than relying on federal grants and scholarships points to disturbing trends.

Government loans have tripled in the last 10 years while grants have declined, so that a third to a half of all undergraduates are leaving school in debt.

In the last 10 years the cost of a college education has continued to rise, yet real income has remained more or less constant. This means that paying for college is now taking a bigger bite out of family incomes.

While upper- and, to an extent, middle-class families will be able to afford the increasing cost of education and remain eligible for loans, lower class families, because of fewer government grants, will be the hardest hit, creating further economic discrimination in education.

The study further states that women and minorities will also be hard hit because they are less willing to incur debt and are less able, at least demographically, to pay back loans.

Priorities are at the heart of the issue. The federal government should not be making it harder for anyone to get a college education. Although budget constraints most often are voiced as the reason for cutting grant and scholarship funds, we believe education should not be compromised — even if it means putting education on a higher priority than defense.

By reducing the availability of grants and encouraging the use of loans for education, the government has shifted the onus of the federal debt from the nation to the individual, and such a move is dangerous for the well-being of the country.

New homeless aid package is hopefully just a start

Late last week, Speaker of the House Jim Wright announced that Congress was going to rush through a \$500 million aid program to help the nation's homeless. The money will be used to build shelters and provide food this winter.

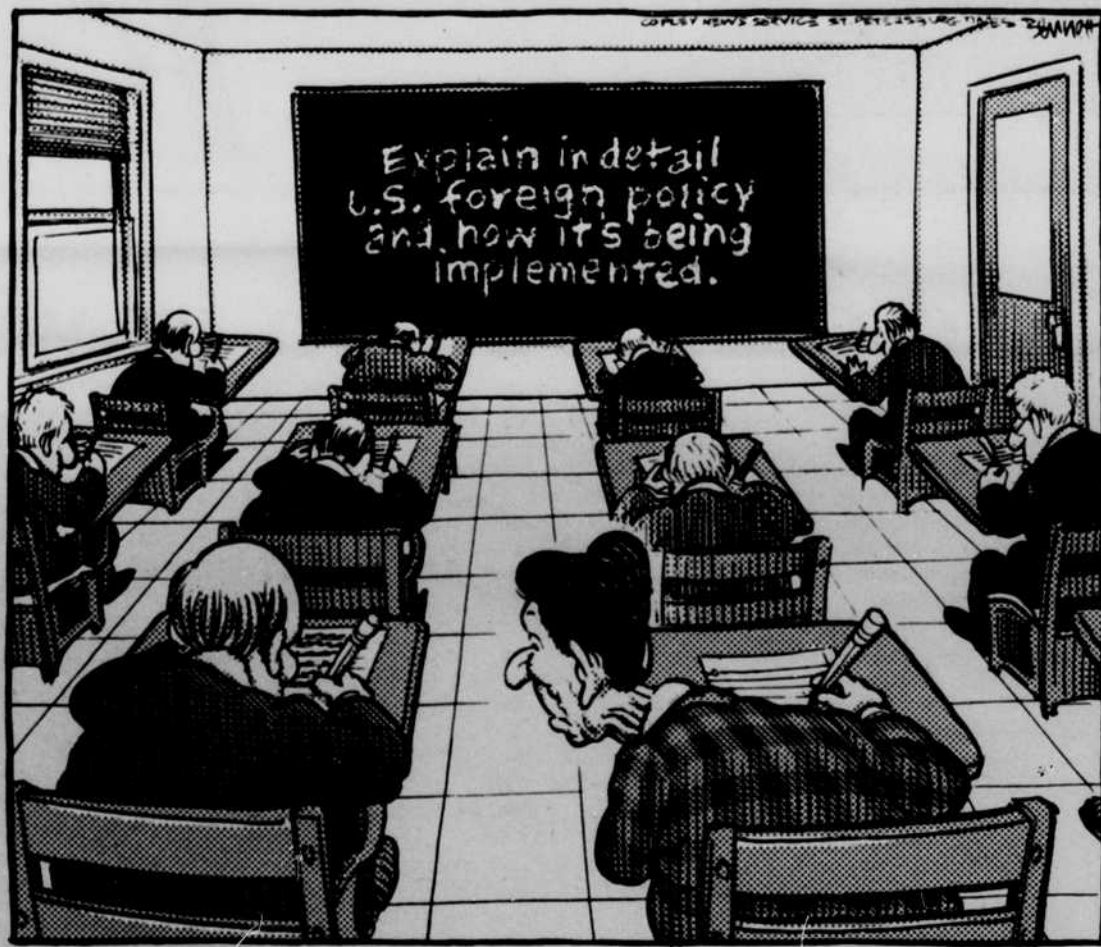
The recent aid program follows a \$6.5 million renovation funding for re-building a Washington D.C. shelter for the homeless, approved by Congress in July.

Although meritorious, the new aid package merely mends a symptom and does not address the causes of homelessness in America.

The character of the homeless has been changing. The stereotypical "down-and-outers" are still showing up at shelters around the nation, but unlike in the past, entire families are adding to the growing number of this nation's homeless population. Shelters for the homeless are also seeing an increase in the number of displaced workers.

What is needed is more emphasis on re-training programs for an increasingly complex job market. Education in new job skills would offer long-run economic growth, as well as provide meaningful employment for the jobless and homeless of America.

The bare minimum our society should be able to offer its citizenry is a warm place to sleep at night and a daily meal. But people need more than that; they need dignity - dignity that comes from being a working member of society.



Background

I would refer readers to the article printed in the Dec. 4 Register-Guard on Karen Talbot and the World Peace Council.

A few facts are in order: the World Peace Council was expelled from France in 1951 and later from Austria in 1957. Presently head-quartered in Helsinki, this acknowledged Soviet front maintains its leverage there due to the economic dependence of Finland on the Soviet Union.

In 1975 the WPC gave its highest award, the Frederic Joliot Curie Gold Medal for Peace, to Yassar Arafat. Another award was given by the WPC that same year to Lolita Lebrun, a Puerto Rican terrorist who shot up the U.S. House of Representatives Visitors' Gallery during the Truman administration. Another year their peace medal was awarded to Leonid Brezhnev.

In 1979 WPC President Romash Chandra commented at a meeting of the WPC offspring, the United States Peace Council, "People ask me, 'You are a peace movement. Why do you support armed struggles in Nicaragua, Palestine, Vietnam?'"

And I reply, "The armed struggle in these countries is the peace movement...."

Why haven't WPC sponsors such as Clergy and Laity Concerned, the Sanctuary Ministry, Beyond War and the others denounced this?

Perhaps Talbot and her supporters would concur with Chandra, when he said, "(The WPC Gold Award) is a symbolic way to express their affection for Comrade Brezhnev, for the glorious Communist Party of the Soviet Union and for the entire Soviet people their gratitude for the brilliant leadership in the work for the implementation of the Soviet Peace Programme and for carrying out of Soviet initiatives on all the urgent international issues of the day."

Jim Statler
Eugene

Once-skeptical

Contrary to Ron Rousseve (ODE, Jan. 8), I do not believe that the "serious intellectual scrutiny" of religious beliefs "invariably" forces a person to choose between reason and religion. Rousseve seems to believe that reason and faith are mutually exclusive, but this denies the legacy bequeathed to us by some of the foremost thinkers in Western civilization.

Surely Rousseve does not believe that his own reasoning abilities outstrip those of men like St. Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes or Albert Einstein, all of whom professed a faith in God, and all of whom were men of reason and science.

Reason and faith may be mutually exclusive in Rousseve and others' own minds, but they are not mutually exclusive by nature.

The theory of evolution, for example, is accepted on faith by most scientists despite the fact that it can never be proven.

To me the idea that Jesus is the promised Messiah is a fact because I have had experiences

in my life that have convinced my once-skeptical self of the reality of religious truths.

The Holy Spirit has born witness to me of these things. There is a way to know about God and Jesus that may not be scientific, but nevertheless is true: ask Him. He has promised to answer.

It has been my experience that most non-religious people accept secular answers to questions about religion without ever asking God about those same religious questions.

He has answered me, and He will answer anyone who really wants to know.

Anton Tolman
GTF, psychology

Loans

I am a junior at the University in my fourth year. Last year I took a year off to have a baby; he is now 16 and a half months old. The years before I got pregnant I worked 20 to 30 hours a week to help finance my education.

This year I am working as many hours as I can (6 to 10 hours) each week. Both my husband and I took out loans again this year, but the financial aid was cut so much that we will probably have to drop out of school long before we graduate.

A horrible thought has come to us: How can we pay back about \$12,000 in loans when we cannot even finish our educations due to the cutbacks in financial aid?

This reminds me of an old saying, "penny-wise, pound-foolish." The country is saving a little by cutting financial aid, but many students will have to drop out of school as a result.

How can the United States compete with Japan and West Germany when students can no longer afford to go to school?

Something must be done immediately to replenish the student aid budget. I urge everyone to write to their representatives in Congress, now, to insist upon changes.

Erica Freeman Shamloo
Junior

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