

June 11, 2014

Joel Kotkin says the liberal power elite will not tolerate dissent.

In ways not seen since at least the McCarthy era, Americans are finding themselves increasingly constrained by a rising class—what I call the progressive Clerisy—that accepts no dissent from its basic tenets. Like the First Estate in pre-revolutionary France, the Clerisy increasingly exercises its power to constrain dissenting views, whether on politics, social attitudes or science.

An alliance of upper level bureaucrats and cultural elites, the Clerisy, for all their concerns about inequality, have thrived, unlike most Americans, in recent years. They also enjoy strong relations with the power structure in Washington, Silicon Valley, Hollywood and Wall Street.

As the modern clerisy has seen its own power grow, even while the middle class shrinks, it has used its influence to enforce a prescribed set of acceptable ideas. On everything from gender and sexual preference to climate change, those who dissent from the official pieties risk punishment.

This power has been seen recently in a host of cancellations of commencement speakers. Just in the past few months Ayaan Hirsi Ali, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, International Monetary Fund managing director Christine Lagarde, and former UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau, have been prevented from speaking by campus virtue squads whose sensibilities they had offended.

The spate of recent cancellation reflects an increasingly overbearing academic culture that promotes speech codes on what is permissible to say and even seeks to provide “trigger warnings” to warn students about the presence of nominally troubling subject matter in readings and discussions so they can avoid the elements of reality they find offensive.

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The rise of today's Clerisy stems from the growing power and influence of its three main constituent parts: the creative elite of media and entertainment, the academic community, and the high-level government bureaucracy. ...

Victor Davis Hanson says Kotkin's narrow minded clerisy has created a Medieval system in our universities.

Employment rates for college graduates are dismal. Aggregate student debt is staggering. But university administrative salaries are soaring. The campus climate of tolerance has utterly disappeared. Only the hard sciences and graduate schools have salvaged American universities' international reputations.

For over two centuries, our superb system of American public and private higher education kept pace with radically changing times and so ensured our prosperity and reinforced democratic pluralism.

But a funny thing has happened on the way to the 21st century. Colleges that were once our most enlightened and tolerant institutions became America's dinosaurs.

Start with ossified institutions. Tenure may have been a good idea in the last century to ensure faculty members free expression. But such a spoils system now encourages the opposite result of protecting monotonies of thought. In a globalized world where jobs disappear in an eye blink and professionals must be attuned to the slightest changes in the global marketplace, academics insist that after six years they still deserve lifetime guarantees of employment. ...

Roger Simon says the colleges are being taken over by "brown shirts."

A fusillade of attacks by students and faculty on commencement speakers and honorary degree awardees at four of our better known schools — Smith, Haverford, Rutgers and Brandeis — has tarnished this year's commencement season beyond any in recent memory. Speakers as distinguished as Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde, former Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have been forced to withdraw even as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, one of the most courageous fighters of oppression on the planet, had to walk from her honorary degree from a university established in the shadow of the Holocaust. Go figure.

What next? The Bill of Rights gets repealed? An academic "War on Women"? (Three of the four attacked are female.) A new generation of undergraduate Brown Shirts comes back from 1930s Berlin to smash every college window and burn every school library book by unapproved authors in a renewed Kristallnacht? ...

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After years of looking at the data, Google has found that things like college GPAs and transcripts are almost worthless in hiring. Following these revelations, the company is hiring more and more people who never even went to college.

In an interview with The New York Times, Google's Senior Vice President for People Operations Laszlo Bock revealed that the number of degree-less hires has trended upwards as they've stopped asking for transcripts for everybody but the most recent graduates.

"What's interesting is the proportion of people without any college education at Google has increased over time as well," Bock said. "So we have teams where you have 14 percent of the team made up of people who've never gone to college." ...

A **WSJ OpEd** says employment is low because the government has made jobs more expensive to create.

In President Obama's speeches this year, a steady theme has been creating jobs and economic opportunity for Americans. In his State of the Union address in January he said that "what I believe unites the people of this nation . . . is the simple, profound belief in opportunity for all—the notion that if you work hard and take responsibility, you can get ahead." And in his weekly address on Saturday, he repeated his strong appeal to young people: "As long as I hold this office, I'll keep fighting to give more young people the chance to earn their own piece of the American Dream."

Yet during the more than five years Mr. Obama has been in office, young people have been especially hard-hit by the slow and virtually jobless recovery. Given the destructive effect this has on individual initiative and the prospects of a productive and rewarding working life, the continuing struggle of young Americans to find jobs, start building families and contribute to society is no longer simply a matter of politics or policy. On a deeply human level, it's profoundly sad.

Consider these grim employment numbers: ..

Daily Beast

[Watch What You Say, The New Liberal Power Elite Won't Tolerate Dissent](#)

The new liberal ruling elite, a mix of academics and cultural powerbrokers, is like the old clerical orders—wielding it's wealth and power to enforce “truths” and punish dissenters.

by Joel Kotkin

In ways not seen since at least the McCarthy era, Americans are finding themselves increasingly constrained by a rising class—what I call the progressive Clerisy—that accepts no dissent from its basic tenets. Like the First Estate in pre-revolutionary France, the Clerisy increasingly exercises its power to constrain dissenting views, whether on politics, social attitudes or science.

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This power has been seen recently in a host of cancellations of commencement speakers. Just in the past few months Ayaan Hirsi Ali, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, International Monetary Fund managing director Christine Lagarde, and former UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau, have been prevented from speaking by campus virtue squads whose sensibilities they had offended.

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The Clerisy operates on very different principles than its rival power brokers, the oligarchs of finance, technology or energy. The power of the knowledge elite does not stem primarily from money, but in persuading, instructing and regulating the rest of society. Like the British Clerisy or the old church-centered French First Estate, the contemporary Clerisy increasingly promotes a single increasingly parochial ideology and, when necessary, has the power to marginalize, or excommunicate, miscreants from the public sphere.

Of course, every society needs a clerical class, to instruct the young and maintain cultural standards. But in the past, at least in modern America, they tended to be a tolerance for fairly disparate views. Today's Clerisy, by contrast, is increasingly homogeneous in its beliefs- despite pockets of conservative power such as the Heritage Foundation and most notably the media empire controlled by the Murdoch family.

The modern Clerisy's homogeneity springs from their social conditioning. Educated along similar ideological lines at major universities, they tend to be geographically concentrated in wealthy, "progressive" places, where few dissent from the prevailing worldview. As such they breathe, as analyst Walter Russell Mead suggests, "within a cocoon." Inside their urban cocoons they operate from a thoroughly internalized set of progressive tropes on such issues as the environment, urbanism, gender and race. In practical terms, such as in their support of President Obama and the Democratic Party, they are both broadly allied with centers of power and influence, much as the clergy was in Medieval and early modern times.

America's Nomenklatura

The Clerisy has thrived during these hard times. Since 1990, the number of government workers has expanded by some five million to some twenty million. That's four times the number who were employed by the government at the end of the Second World War, a growth rate roughly twice that of the population as a whole.

The upper bureaucracy have been among the greatest beneficiaries—along with Wall Street and the green crony capitalists —of the Obama Administration's economic policy. The number of workers, particularly at the federal level, continued to rise even at the height of the great recession. Between late 2007 and mid-2009, the number of U.S. federal workers earning at least \$150,000 more than doubled. The ranks of federal *nomenklatura*—combined with a host of related private contractors — have swelled so much that Washington DC by 2012 replaced New York as the wealthiest region in the country .

The upper bureaucracy has evolved into a privileged and cossetted caste. In California, state workers are allowed such special privileges as having their Department of Motor Vehicle records kept confidential; a sensible precaution for those, like police, who deal with criminals but now expanded to cover a vast array of public servants, including social workers. Naturally, as beneficiaries of an expanded government, public sector unions have been among the strongest backers of regulatory growth and ever increased social services. Their political power has also been on the rise; since 1989, public sector unions accounted for two of the top three top ten donors to political candidates.

More important still is the bureaucracy's ability to control society through unelected agencies, something that grew even during Republican administrations, but has achieved unprecedented scale under President Obama. Increasingly, agencies such as the EPA and HUD, seek to shape community development patterns—for example on land use policies — that traditionally fell under local control. With their power, the agencies have harassed unfriendly conservative organizations,

as seen by the IRS, and monitored the populace's private conversations, seen in the case of the NSA. But to some prominent members of the Clerisy, these power grabs haven't gone far enough.

Leading figures of the Clerisy, like former Obama budget advisor Peter Orszag and Thomas Friedman, argue that power should shift from naturally contentious elected bodies—subject to pressure from the lower orders—to credentialed “experts” operating in Washington, Brussels or the United Nations. The popular will, according to the Clerisy and its allies, lacks the scientific judgment and societal wisdom to be trusted with power.

The Real College of Cardinals.

Like the upper bureaucracy, academia has also expanded rapidly in recent decades. In 1958 universities and colleges employed under 370,000 people; by 2014 that number had expanded to roughly 1.7 million. With universities now serving roughly twenty million full and part time students, academics have never exercised more influence over young Americans.

Ironically, despite its patina of egalitarian beliefs, the academic world now epitomizes the new hierarchical class order as much as any major institution. The roughly 1.4 million instructors in the University system, have experienced what one writer calls “the great stratification” between roughly 500,000 largely older tenured “alpha” Professors and a vast “beta” of low-paid teaching assistants, contingent faculty and those working in extension programs.

At the same time, the bureaucracy of the University, like that of the government, has exploded, even more at elite (and tax-favored) private schools than among public ones. Whereas there were about 250,000 administrators and professional staff members in 1975, about half the number of professors, by 2005 there were over 750,000, easily outnumbering tenure-tracked professors. As the University has gained in power, those in control have taken on ever more the trappings of an aristocracy whose primary mission is self-preservation—not unlike the Medieval European clergy.

The Creative Elite

The final element of the Clerisy's triumvirate is the culture-based industries and their upper middle classes participants. Arnold Toynbee identified the “creative genius” as the historic leader and savior of society—an apt description of the self image held by many of the new tech and media elites.

Today, this “creative” element has grown ever more pervasive. Artists, writers, fashion designers and actors have achieved enormous status in our society; and a handful has become very wealthy. More important still has been the rise of media oligarchs, some tied to the tech establishment, who now rank among the wealthiest Americans. Indeed of the world's 25 richest people, a majority come from either the information sector, the fashion industry or media. These new media elites, combined with the tech oligarchy, could well emerge as the dominant economic force of the 21st Century, surpassing fortunes made in energy, manufacturing, or housing.

The media itself is increasingly populated by the children of prominent politicians and by those who come from the ranks of the plutocracy. These include the offspring of the Reagans, GOP stand-bearer John McCain, various Kennedys, and Nancy Pelosi. In Hollywood, meanwhile, some of the new powerful producers come from the ranks of the ultra-rich, including heirs to the Pritzker fortune and the daughter of Oracle Founder Larry Ellison, one of the world's ten richest men.

The Clerical Consensus

Today's Clerisy attempts to distill today's distinctly secular "truths"—on issues ranging from the nature of justice, race and gender to the environment—and decide what is acceptable and that which is not. Those who dissent from the accepted point of view can expect their work to be simply ignored, or in some cases vilified. In the Clerical bastion of San Francisco, an actress with heretical views, in this case supporting a Tea Party candidate, who was pilloried, and lost work for her offense.

The pattern of intolerance has been particularly notable in the area of climate change, where serious debate would seem prudent not only on the root causes and effects, but also what may present the best solutions. Climate scientists who diverge from the warming party line, even in a matter of degree, are routinely excoriated by the Clerisy as "deniers" of "settled" science even in the face of 15 years of relatively stable temperatures. The media also participates in this defense of orthodoxy. The Los Angeles Times as well as the website Reddit have chosen to exclude contributions from skeptics.

The stifling orthodoxy from the technocrats and media elite is benign compared to the inquisitorial behavior can be seen in institutions of higher education. It is nothing short of tragic, notes civil libertarian Nat Hentoff, that a 2010 survey of 24,000 college students found that barely a third thought it "safe to hold unpopular views on campus."

Such attitudes seem natural in an environment where, according to various studies, liberals outnumber conservatives by between eight and fourteen to one. Whether this reflects natural preferences among the well-educated or is partially due to institutional discrimination remains arguable. But consider that 96 percent of all Presidential donations from the nation's Ivy League schools went to Barack Obama, something more reminiscent of Soviet Russia than a properly functioning pluralistic academy. Nor is there any sign that this trend is slowing. Between 2007 and 2010, a University of California study revealed that "far left" and liberal views grew from 55 percent to almost 63 percent of full-time faculty while the conservative segment dropped from roughly 16 % to less than 12%. If the academic left simply waits long enough, it could look forward to a conservative-free faculty on many campuses.

A similar, if less uniform, clerical consensus suffuses the media culture, led by the television networks and the leading newspapers. In fact nearly half of all Americans consider the media too liberal, more than three times as many who see it as too conservative. Overall, reports Pew, the percentage who feel news is tilted to one side has grown dramatically from 53 percent in 1985 to 77 percent in 2011.

To be sure, there remain important exceptions to this rule, notably Fox News and talk radio, and the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. Yet the right's hold on the major media is demonstrably weak, and likely to decline further once Murdoch himself is no longer on the scene. A detailed UCLA study found that of the twenty leading news outlets in the country, eighteen were left of center.

Despite the journalistic embrace of the idea of diversity, a recent Indiana University Study notes that journalists themselves have become increasingly homogeneous. Journalists are far more likely to be college educated than they were in 1970, and less likely to be a racial minority than just a decade ago. But the biggest change has been an ideological one; barely seven percent in 2013 were Republican, compared to nearly a quarter in 1971.

Even Arnold Brisbane, the former ombudsman of the *The New York Times*, has noted the group-think that now overshadows objectivity, long cherished by that most important of America media outlets. Brisbane observed that, “so many share a kind of political and cultural progressivism—for lack of a better term—that this worldview virtually bleeds through the fabric of The Times.”

These positions are all reflected in almost lock-step media support for President Obama. Over sixteen prominent journalists joined the Obama administration, which was something of a record; in 2012 employees at the major networks sent President Obama almost eight times as much in contributions as they did his Republican opponent.

This consensus of views prevails as well in the electronic media. As the liberal author Jonathan Chait suggests, the media increasingly reflects not just commercial values, but “a vast left-wing conspiracy.” He adds: “You don’t have to be an especially devoted consumer of film or television (I’m not) to detect a pervasive, if not total, liberalism.”

Will the Clerisy rule after Obama?

The fact that Republicans continue to maintain considerable power in both Washington and the states suggests that the Clerisy’s power is not yet determinative. And indeed after President Obama leaves office, the Clerisy’s reach may be temporarily diminished, but its ability to set the social and political agenda will likely persist and even grow given their influence to shape perceptions, particularly among the young.

The current atmosphere of ideological unanimity—in academia, the arts and much of the government bureaucracy—set the stage for the outrages of this commencement season, making painfully palpable the growing authoritarian spirit in so many of our leading institutions. They often see themselves as a liberating force in our society, but in their dislike of conflicting ideas and open debate, today’s Clerisy increasingly resembles the closed-minded dogmatists of the Medieval church.

National Review

[America’s Medieval Universities](#)

Today’s campus is more reactionary than the objects of its frequent vituperation.

by Victor Davis Hanson

Employment rates for college graduates are dismal. Aggregate student debt is staggering. But university administrative salaries are soaring. The campus climate of tolerance has utterly disappeared. Only the hard sciences and graduate schools have salvaged American universities’ international reputations.

For over two centuries, our superb system of American public and private higher education kept pace with radically changing times and so ensured our prosperity and reinforced democratic pluralism.

But a funny thing has happened on the way to the 21st century. Colleges that were once our most enlightened and tolerant institutions became America’s dinosaurs.

Start with ossified institutions. Tenure may have been a good idea in the last century to ensure faculty members free expression. But such a spoils system now encourages the opposite result of

protecting monotonies of thought. In a globalized world where jobs disappear in an eye blink and professionals must be attuned to the slightest changes in the global marketplace, academics insist that after six years they still deserve lifetime guarantees of employment.

In the age of the Internet and global readerships, faculty promotion is still based largely on narrow publication in little-read, peer-reviewed journals. Many are often incestuous and have no bearing on enhancing faculty teaching skills.

Post-tenure review and peer evaluations have become pro forma quid pro quos among guild members. The result is a calcified professoriate that demands it alone can still live in the protected world of the 1950s.

Part-time teachers and graduate students are not so lucky. They are often paid less than half for the same work done by full-time faculty, in illiberal fashion that would be unacceptable at Walmart or Target.

Universities are the least transparent of U.S. institutions, defending protocols more secretive than those of the Swiss banking system. Few colleges publish the profile of students who were favored in the admission process through legacies, athletic prowess, or race and gender preferences. The result is that almost no one knows why one student gets into Yale or Stanford and another with a far more impressive academic record does not.

Universities claim they are committed to creating a student body that looks like America. In fact, they deliberately ignore the most important diversity of all — thought. About half the country is fairly conservative. Yet by any measure — faculty profiles, campus speakers, student organizations — colleges discriminate against those not deemed sufficiently progressive.

Conservative speakers are now routinely disinvited from commencement addresses. Students or faculty members who offer public skepticism about gay marriage or unfettered abortion, voice pro-Israel sentiments, or express doubts about man-caused global warming can easily earn campus pariah status.

The liberal-arts curricula are likewise fossils of the 1960s, the era of their professors' race, class, and gender activism. Such therapeutic courses short the very skills — written and oral proficiency, historical knowledge, and math and science mastery — that alone prepare graduates for a chance at a successful career trajectory.

Most disturbing is the inability of the modern university to adjust to the 21st-century workplace. Students are not graduating in four years. They are piling up crippling debt. They cannot figure out the byzantine nature of their high-interest student-loan packages. And they are hardly assured of jobs commensurate with their unsustainable investment in education.

The university's reactionary response is to keep jacking up tuition faster than the rate of inflation, to count on still more open-ended federally guaranteed student loans, and to keep its budgetary figures mostly hidden.

How odd, then, that the campus is more reactionary than the objects of its frequent vituperation, from the corporation to the military. Academics resist the sort of long-needed reforms that they always seem to demand of others in American society.

We cannot expect the current self-interested establishment in charge of the university to reform it. Its failure to educate students for well-paying jobs while charging them excessive fees, may alone force a reckoning.

The Internet, tech schools, and correspondence courses are already eroding the monopolies of the campus. Whether the academic establishment likes it or not, a new generation of leadership will have to ensure equal pay for equal work, an end to lifetime sinecures, a new way of assessing university achievement, transparency in budgeting and admissions, political balance and tolerance, and a complete overhaul of the liberal-arts curriculum.

Either higher education will give up its medieval privileges, begin to be accountable, and live in the modern world, or it will be reduced to a costly relic for a tiny elite.

An aging campus generation that has nearly wrecked the university should bow out and let more open-minded and innovative minds repair the damage that the old generation has wrought.

— *Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and the author, most recently, of The Savior Generals.*

Roger L. Simon

The Rise of the Campus Brown Shirts



A fusillade of attacks by students and faculty on commencement speakers and honorary degree awardees at four of our better known schools — Smith, Haverford, Rutgers and Brandeis — has tarnished this year's commencement season beyond any in recent memory. Speakers as distinguished as Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde, former Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have been forced to withdraw even as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, one of the most courageous fighters of oppression on the planet, had to walk from her honorary degree from a university established in the shadow of the Holocaust. Go figure.

What next? The Bill of Rights gets repealed? An academic “War on Women”? (Three of the four attacked are female.) A new generation of undergraduate Brown Shirts comes back from 1930s Berlin to smash every college window and burn every school library book by unapproved authors in a renewed Kristallnacht?

Of course all of the above dignitaries finally walked away voluntarily from their campus honors, underlining the juvenile absurdity of these same students and faculty, not to mention the paleo-milquetost behavior of their administrations. Mercifully, [William G. Bowen](#), the former Princeton president who replaced Lagarde as Haverford commencement speaker, called out the protestors as “immature” and “arrogant” during his speech, an understatement, to be sure, but welcome nonetheless.

This would all be great fodder for *Saturday Night Live*, if it still had any spine. Or a tough conservative or libertarian comedy show, if there were one. But in the final analysis, it’s not all that funny. Something is seriously wrong with our university system — as if we didn’t know. And the fault is less with the students — they are what they are and finally just young people — as with the faculties, especially in the social sciences and what’s left of the humanities. (There can’t be much left in a system where, even at UCLA, English majors are no longer required to read Shakespeare and Milton. The way things are going, it won’t be long before they aren’t even *allowed* to read them voluntarily — or at least without an introduction warning the student to beware of the author’s “privilege.”)

I never took literally the famous quote attributed to Churchill: “A man who is not a liberal at 20 has no heart. A man who is not a conservative at 40 has no brain.” But it had a certain resonance in reference to basic maturity and common sense. That’s why we remember it.

You don’t have to be an abject follower of Edmund Burke to realize that the role of a faculty member is to instruct and reveal received knowledge in as impartial manner as possible, not to fulminate on like an arrested adolescent as if he or she were still protesting the Vietnam War what feels like a hundred years later.

What this does is give the younger generation nowhere to go. Some protest in youth is normal, but if the older generation is still taking up so much of the playing field, you leave the younger with no place of their own but the more bizarre and outré extremes. Therefore someone like Hirsi Ali, who should be an international hero of human rights, becomes a villain. And, as it did recently at Dartmouth, the word “[fiesta](#)” used by an Anglo for a heart disease benefit becomes an instrument of supposed racial oppression.

We have to put an end to this ASAP. That starts with putting pressure on that arrested faculty and their administration enablers. And the ones to do it are the parents paying a fortune for this nonsense.

Business Insider

[Google Has Started Hiring More People Who Didn't Go To College](#)

by Max Nisen

After years of looking at the data, Google has found that things like college GPAs and transcripts are almost worthless in hiring. Following these revelations, the company is hiring more and more people who never even went to college.

In an interview with The New York Times, Google's Senior Vice President for People Operations Laszlo Bock revealed that the number of degree-less hires has trended upwards as they've stopped asking for transcripts for everybody but the most recent graduates.

"What's interesting is the proportion of people without any college education at Google has increased over time as well," Bock said. "So we have teams where you have 14 percent of the team made up of people who've never gone to college."

Bock's critique of higher education goes beyond debunking the GPA as a hiring metric. He says the academic setting is an artificial place where people are highly trained to succeed only in a specific environment.

"One of my own frustrations when I was in college and grad school is that you knew the professor was looking for a specific answer," Bock says. "You could figure that out, but it's much more interesting to solve problems where there isn't an obvious answer. You want people who like figuring out stuff where there is no obvious answer."

After two or three years, performance at college is "completely unrelated" to performance at Google, because the skills you learn are so different and you change so much, Bock says.

Of course, most of Google's hires are still college graduates.

After all, college is still the surest way of learning advanced engineering and other stuff that gets you a job at Google. A college degree still provides some guarantee of intelligence and commitment. And at the end of the day, people with a college degree are far more highly employed and make more money than those who don't graduate.

WSJ

[Why Young People Can't Find Work](#)

The main culprits are policies that make new jobs more expensive.

by Andrew Puzder

In President Obama's speeches this year, a steady theme has been creating jobs and economic opportunity for Americans. In his State of the Union address in January he said that "what I believe unites the people of this nation . . . is the simple, profound belief in opportunity for all—the notion that if you work hard and take responsibility, you can get ahead." And in his weekly address on Saturday, he repeated his strong appeal to young people: "As long as I hold this office, I'll keep fighting to give more young people the chance to earn their own piece of the American Dream."

Yet during the more than five years Mr. Obama has been in office, young people have been especially hard-hit by the slow and virtually jobless recovery. Given the destructive effect this has on individual initiative and the prospects of a productive and rewarding working life, the continuing struggle of young Americans to find jobs, start building families and contribute to society is no longer simply a matter of politics or policy. On a deeply human level, it's profoundly sad.

Consider these grim employment numbers:

- In February the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recorded the lowest percentage of 16- to 19-year-olds working or actively looking for work (32.9%) since the bureau started tracking the data in 1948. The BLS recorded the second-lowest labor-participation rate for this group in April (33.2%) and the third-lowest in January (33.3%). May's rate was the sixth lowest (33.8%).
- Over the past two years, the BLS has recorded some of the worst labor participation rates for 20- to 24-year-olds since 1973, when the Vietnam War was beginning to wind down. In August 2012, the 69.7% rate was the lowest since '73. The second-lowest (70%) came in March last year. This year, the third-lowest rate came in April (70.2%). May's rate was a still-miserable 71%.
- Looking at the seasonally unadjusted data—which is what the BLS makes publicly available—for 25- to 29-year-olds, the April 2014 labor-participation rate was the lowest the BLS has recorded since it started tracking the data in 1982 (79.8%). May's rate was the second-lowest (79.9%). January, February and March tied with the fourth-lowest (80.3%).

These disturbing numbers raise a simple question: Where are the entry-level jobs?

Five years of 2% average yearly GDP growth simply doesn't produce enough jobs to absorb the natural increase in the labor force, and over the past eight quarters GDP growth has averaged only 1.7%. Between May 2008 and May 2014, BLS data show that the employable population increased by 14,217,000 while the number of people employed actually decreased by 94,000 and the number of people unemployed increased by 1,404,000. It remains a bad time for young people to be looking for jobs.

Nonetheless, various states and municipalities have increased their minimum wage, thereby increasing the cost of employing inexperienced workers. Minimum-wage jobs have always been a gateway to better opportunities. In making hiring decisions, businesses must weigh the quality and value of work that entry-level employees produce against the cost of employing them. For many businesses in high-minimum-wage states or municipalities—Seattle leads the list, having approved a move to a \$15 minimum wage—that trade-off is no longer working.

The bottom line on labor: Make something less expensive and businesses will use more of it. Make something more expensive and businesses will use less of it. The Congressional Budget Office has forecast a loss of 500,000 jobs should the president's proposal to increase the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour become law.

The CBO also forecast that this increase would lift a number of people who already have jobs above the poverty threshold. For 500,000 unemployed people, however, that's 500,000 opportunities American businesses will never create.

ObamaCare is also increasing the cost of hiring inexperienced workers. The health-care law requires that businesses with more than 50 full-time employees offer medical insurance to employees working 30 or more hours a week. The administration knows that the employer mandate will kill jobs and has twice delayed implementing it. With an election on the horizon, American businesses know that these delays were political and that the mandate's economically damaging impact is in the pipeline, coming their way.

ObamaCare gives businesses an incentive to either eliminate entry-level jobs or keep the workers' hours to under 30 a week. It also gives businesses a reason to reduce the hours of experienced employees to under 30 a week. These experienced employees are now working second jobs to compensate for their lost hours—resulting in fewer positions for less-experienced workers.

To get on the ladder of opportunity, America's young people need jobs. Creating disincentives to hire them diminishes the notion that "if you work hard and take responsibility, you can get ahead." The reality is that you can't get ahead if you can't find a job.

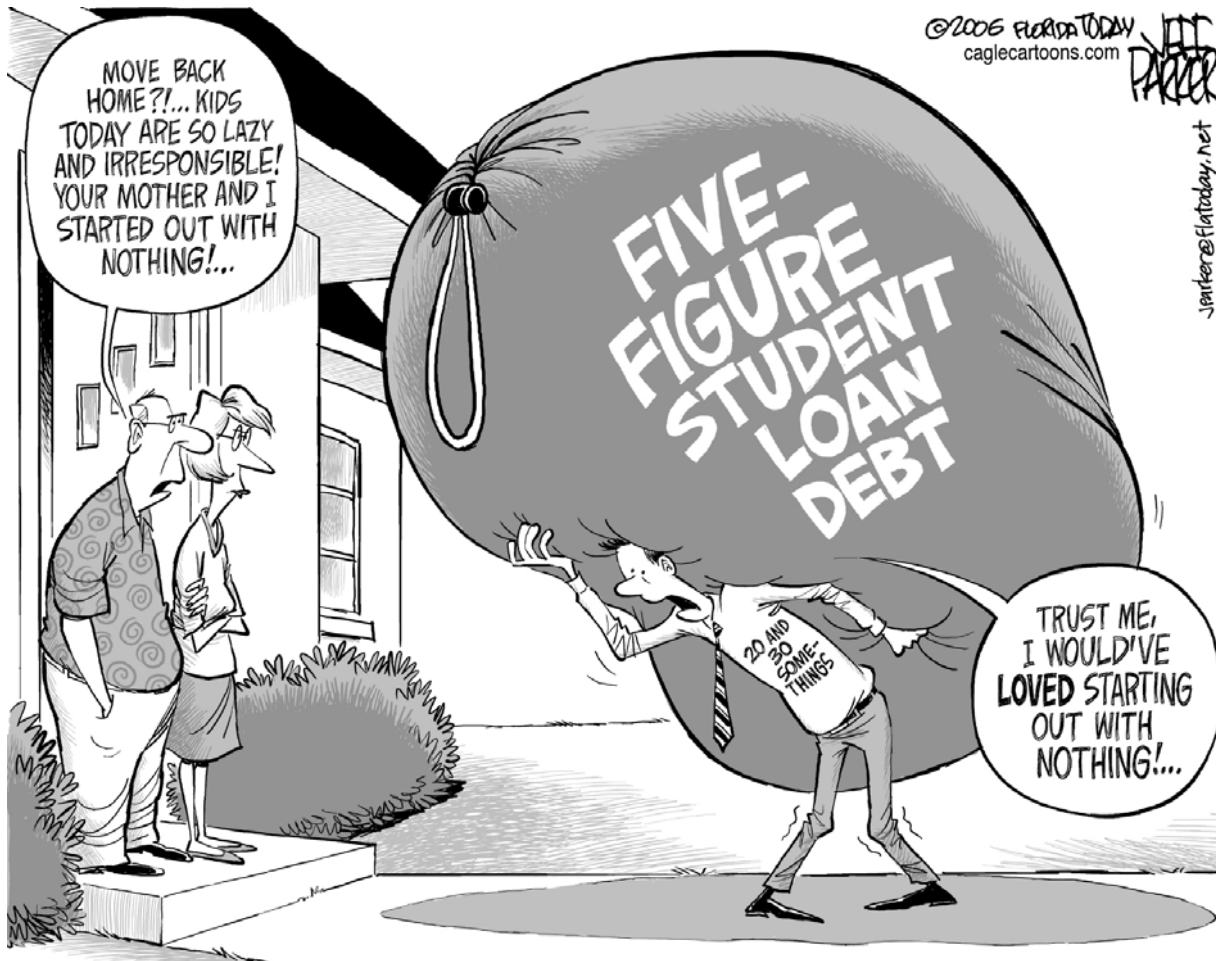
I'm not speaking primarily as a business CEO. My company will adjust to new laws. I'm speaking as someone from a working-class family. I started work scooping ice cream for the minimum wage at Baskin-Robbins. To put myself through college and law school while supporting my family, I cut lawns, painted houses and busted concrete with a jackhammer. I know how important these jobs are. For one thing, they taught me—as no lectures from my parents ever could—that I needed a good education so I wouldn't have to settle for low-paying work the rest of my life. Too many young people today are being deprived of even that basic lesson.

Mr. Puzder is the chief executive officer of CKE Restaurants.

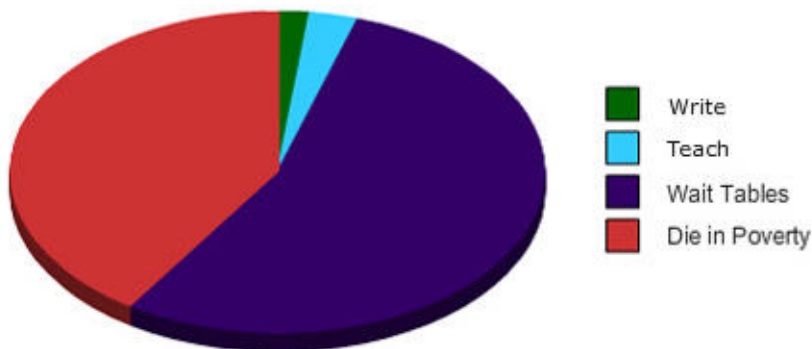
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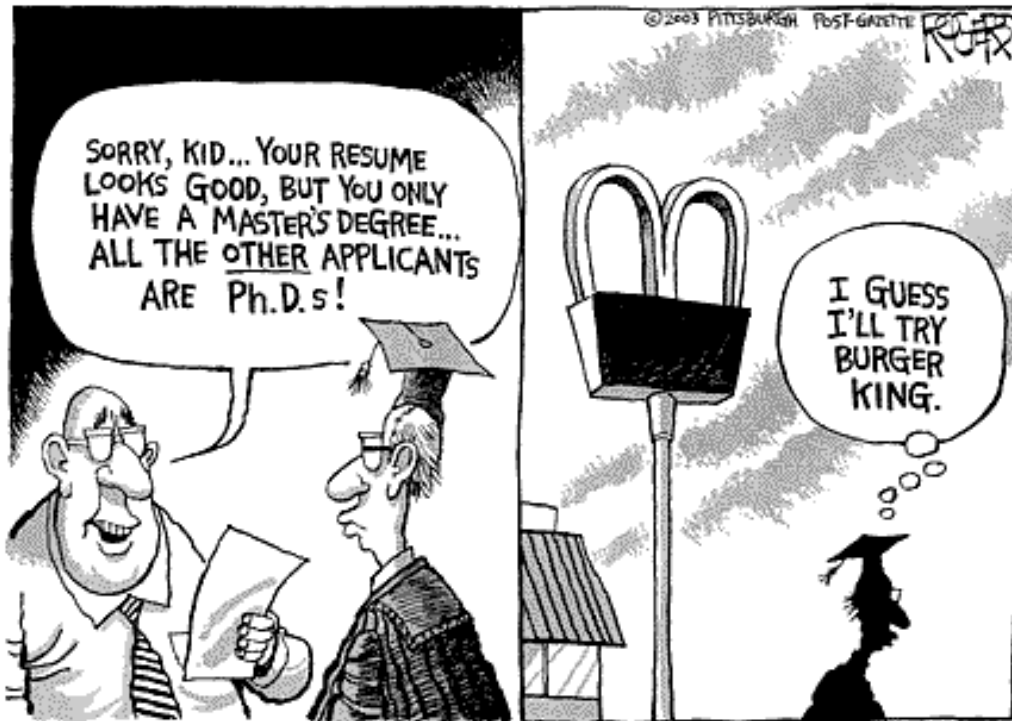


"I'm majoring in political science
and minoring in ballet — I
want to be a spin doctor."



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