THESE BIG CORPORATIONS

Editorial by Charles Loomis Funnell
(Saturday Evening Post, Nov. 21, 1925)

Is it such a bad idea to work for a big company? Do they promote more slowly, pay less and offer fewer opportunities to recent college graduates than the smaller organizations?

These are interesting questions. You hear quite a few young college men asking them. I asked them myself just the other day.

The man I asked is a vice president of a big corporation. Because he is the kind of man young chaps like to talk with, he spends about ten per cent of his time helping them to straighten up their ideas of what they want to do in business, and how they want to go about doing it.

"The fairest way to answer you," said the V. P., "is to look at these big corporations through the young man's eyes. Here are things that eight out of every ten uncertain young men tell me are their objections to the large company as an employer:"

"First, the big company deliberately makes a very low salary bid for the young graduate's services."

"Second, it promotes slowly, with small raises for the first few years."

"Third, it is too impersonal; the young graduate doesn't meet the president very often—perhaps not once in five years."

"Fourth, the job of the company is so big that any job a young man may do is too small to be interesting."

"Fifth, the big company is a big company, and by association of ideas that means that it must be intangibly heartless and soulless."

"Now to answer these grave charges, let me tell you about Tommy Burton. He left us in October two years ago. He had been with us a year and a half. He told me he was leaving to join a one-man business. He cited the five big-company indictments I have just listed for you, and said that he knew the president of his prospective employer."

"He has passed the stage where they stop to think how long he has been out of school when they are deciding raises. He has erased the objection of impersonality, for like his associates, he now knows more than they do about certain parts of the business.

"Having learned to give out, he can now take in. He has ceased to worry about the bigness of his outfit, too, for that bigness brings advantages of itself."

"There is, for example, the matter of geography. With a small organization, having a single office and an area of business activity of only a few hundred square miles, a young man comes to think of business in terms of a few cities, a few counties, or, at best, a few states. But with the large organizations where offices are maintained in half a hundred cities, the chap who is coming along in that company gets a viewpoint of business which is not local but national. His trips take him to more and more remote sections. He finds that things are done differently in each of his company's territories, his thinking becomes broader not only on business subjects but on government, politics, sociology and culture."

By way of counteracting that charge of slow promotion, the V. P. again compared the Small Company with a sizable outfit. In the Small Company, there are four jobs that pay well. There are three sons of the president in the business. With the larger organization, on the other hand, the very size of the business makes it necessary to find

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many dozens of men to fill good jobs every year. And since it requires at least two years to get a thorough grounding in the company's operation, most of those jobs are filled from the ranks.

A dozen years from now a large percentage of the Tommy Burtons who have stayed along with the big companies will find their jobs highly pleasant. They will be transacting interdepartment business with men who have grown up, as they have, with their outfits. And, perhaps, if they check their incomes against those of their classmates who have put into practice their theories of small-company advantages, they will find themselves surprisingly well off by comparison.

It is true that the first few years with a large company are usually years of slow progress. But they are also years of investment in experience. Like any other investment, the company back of it should be chosen with care. Properly placed, those investment years should bring a splendid return in growth, in widened acquaintance and in income. It is not such a bad thing after all to work for an outfit that is bigger than any one industry, any one community or any one personality.