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# THESE BIG CORPORATIONS

Editorial by CHARLES LOOMIS FUNNELL

(Saturday Evening Post, Nov. 21, 1925)

**I**S 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?

Those 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 10 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 employing firm very well. Mr. Small wanted Tommy to bring his young ideas to the Small publishing business and work through the office, eventually becoming a member of the firm.

"What happened? Tommy went with the Small Company, of course. He got his contact with the president—daily. Mr. Small opened the mail himself, a sacred rite which he felt enabled him to keep his finger on the business. He even opened mail addressed personally to Tommy. Each day after the opening ceremony, Mr. Small called Tommy in and gave him that part of the postal offering which he wanted Tommy to handle.

"One morning Mr. Small handed Tommy an inquiry asking the cost of twelve pages of advertising in the Small periodical, and requesting a suggestion for text and layout. Mr. Small told Tommy to answer the letter and do the copy and layout suggestions.

"Here was what Tommy had been waiting for. He found out where the advertiser's product is sold, who buys it and wherein the product differs

from competitive goods. He found a basic idea and split it up into twelve closely related advertisements. He wrote the copy for the first of the series and outlined material for the eleven others. Then he wrote his letter of transmittal and quoted standard advertising rates.

"When he showed his work to Mr. Small, that gentleman very deliberately tore up the letter, the layout and the copy. He told Tommy that because the inquiry came from a personal friend a special discount was to be quoted, that the layout was too wasteful of white space and the copy too flippant.

"Tommy protested that to quote rates less than those paid by other advertisers was bad publishing ethics, and he backed up his copy and layout by saying it was the result of the same kind of thinking which had built him a fairly good reputation with his previous employer.

"Mr. Small replied that he had been in business some thirty years and no boy two years out of college could tell him how to run it. However, Mr. Small accepted Tommy's next piece of copy as he wrote it, for it was his resignation.

"Tommy is with a big corporation now. At luncheon yesterday he told me how much he enjoys his associates. As he puts it, 'Every one of them knows a lot more than I do about some one part of the business. I can go to lunch with anybody there and learn something.'

"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 countering 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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**GEORGE W. RIGHTMIRE**  
Our New President

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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.

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