

Presidential campaigns, don't you just love them? I had a great discussion with a friend from high school the other day about Bernie Sander's stand on zero tuition for state colleges and universities. My friend felt that nothing should be free; students need skin in the game. I tried my best to remind him that we went to school in the early 60s in California and didn't pay tuition therefore it was essentially free.

To further build my case I blabbed on about working for International Harvester as a warehouseman and making the same money as my friend's father, who had raised a family and owned his own home. Within a year I had saved more than enough to go to college and pay all my expenses – room and board, books etc. - which amounted to around \$500 a semester. I have to admit that my roommates and I lived very frugally.

Going back to the warehouse every summer allowed me to graduate debt free, buy a home and get on with my life. I might mention that our other friends went to work in the trades or factories, married, bought homes and raised families. Life was good!

I tried to build the case further that our fathers served in WW 2 and went to school on the GI Bill. My earliest memories are of living in student housing in the later 40s while my father worked and went to UC Berkeley. After graduation we bought a home and he went back to work full time and did not have any education debt that I know of.

Let's contrast that to today's UC student. In 1980 a University of California student paid \$776 a year in tuition, prior to that they didn't pay any tuition; today that same student is paying a bit over \$16,000. When you consider inflation over that period of time you might be able to live with \$2300 but not \$16,000. And I don't

know of any job, even a good union warehouse job like I had will pay you \$16,000 for summer work.

What concerns me is that a good education is going to be mandatory during the coming decades if present and future students are going to compete globally. As our government pushes more globalization through trade negotiations we might want to seriously consider preparing our work force to meet the challenge, rather than saddle them with more than \$1.2 trillion in student loan debt; a number that can only go higher under the present conditions. Something has to change.

From my perspective if we can build and maintain the largest military the world has ever seen we can surely figure out a way to finance the educational requirements of those who are, according to some presidential candidates, going to make us great again. Personally I already think we are great we just need a little re-thinking about our direction.