

Now You Can Choose a CAREER WITH YOUR EYES OPEN



DOCTOR
\$108,000



LAWYER
\$105,000



ENGINEER
\$95,300



COLLEGE
TEACHER
\$69,300



SOCIAL WORKER
\$51,000

By Madelin Blitzstein

IF you happened to have a large amount of cash and were undecided how to invest it, would you consider taking \$108,000 of your bankroll and investing it in the career of a young man who was just embarking on the profession of medicine?

Would you prefer to put \$105,000 on a youth who had just been admitted to the practice of law? Would an investment of \$95,400 in a budding young dentist appeal to you more, or would you rather take a chance on a journalist at \$41,500?

These figures are not thought up at random as a game for idle speculation. They are the result of eight long years of research in which Dr. Harold F. Clark, professor of educational economics at Teachers' College, Columbia University, studied the average earnings of a long list of professions and trades over a long period of time.

He came to the conclusion, using 42 years as an average working life span, that while it is perfectly safe to invest, for instance, \$95,300 in an engineer on the promise of receiving all his future earnings, you are taking a terrific chance if you invest more than \$12,500 in the career of a farmer.

Dr. Clark undertook this arduous and detailed study in an attempt to develop means of guiding students more accurately in choosing professions that will pay. He had heard of too many instances in which a man's young son or kid brother or nephew had come to him and asked what field of endeavor to select for his life work, and the man had been at a loss to answer.

If the gentleman tried to persuade the boy to become a farmer, or a physician, rarely did he know why he had given that answer. And if he suggested that the youth enlist in the ranks of the bricklayers, the machinists, the carpenters, the paperhangers, or any one of the other skilled trades, it was debatable whether he could state intelligent reasons for his belief.

To Professor Clark's way of thinking, few, if any, of us can give really sound advice to young men and young women who are about to enter life careers. And he believes that the reason why we do not know how to give this advice properly and helpfully is because we have no concrete ideas of the occupations in which the incomes are high and those in which incomes are low. All we have dinned into us are vague, and usually erroneous, ideas about this profession being overcrowded and that one being underpaid.

In the not so distant past it was easy to tell ambitious young men to go west, where opportunities were lying in wait for them. But today, when the west as

well as the east has its own quota of unemployed, and when there is no longer so much "gold in them thar hills," the answer must of necessity be a different one.

IF you are willing to accept the unique contribution of Dr. Clark, who, with his learned associates, has compiled untold millions of figures and facts for the purpose of clarifying the issue, the correct answer today is: Son, enter the professions rather than return to the farm, if you want to make a comfortable living. While it may sound contrary to what you have heard from your elders, Dr. Clark states emphatically that if he were advising a young man about to prepare for his life work, he would suggest that he enter one of the following professions in the order named: medicine, engineering, dentistry, architecture, and college teaching.

The element of Dr. Clark's personal preference enters, for, although the law ranked second to medicine in financial returns, he does not list it among the most desirable professions.

His own personal selections, which were given in answer to a direct question, were the result, he said, of his study, plus his own preference in the matter of occupations and their long-range desirability. Both were important factors in his choices.

From figures collected by colleges, schools, income tax officials and original studies from all parts of the United States, Dr. Clark concluded that the profession of medicine is the best bet. The present value of the earnings of a doctor for a working lifetime, which Dr. Clark estimates at 42 years, equals \$108,000. Lawyers come next, with a present value of \$105,000. Dentists and engineers each are safe investments for a little over \$95,000 (dentists \$95,400, and engineers \$95,300); while architects are next with \$82,500. College teachers have a present value of \$69,300.

At the bottom rung is farm labor, with a present value of \$10,400 for a working lifetime. Farming itself is a trifle better, touching \$12,500, and unskilled labor reaches the not too extravagant figure of \$15,200. Between the college teachers and unskilled labor are seven occupations: social work, with a present value of \$51,000 for a working lifetime; journalism, \$41,500; the ministry, \$41,000; librarians, \$35,000; public school teaching, \$29,700; skilled trades,

\$28,600, and nursing, \$23,300.

All of these figures are based on income studies for the period of 1920 to 1936; if the shorter period of nine years before the crash—1920 to 1929—is taken, all the figures increase. The one which jumps the highest is architecture, which goes from a value of \$82,500 to \$108,000.

"If you want to give good advice to the next bright young man who asks for it," Dr. Clark said, "encourage him to choose an avenue where incomes are high, like medicine and engineering. Discourage him from entering an occupation where incomes are low. Thus you will not only help to increase an individual income but you will also aid in increasing production of those goods and services society values most highly.

"The tendency we found in all groups was that incomes were inadequate and that about one-third more was necessary for comfort and satisfaction. Millions in all occupations do not have a satisfactory standard of living. We do not believe that any possible changes among the occupational groups would totally eliminate this situation since the total income is small, but some shifting, while not a cure, would help.

"Our study has brought out some startling information. Compare the average annual income in the professional groups—from \$4000 to \$5000 for

According to the Clark study, the present value of the lifetime earnings of a doctor is \$108,000; of a lawyer, \$105,000; of an engineer, \$95,300; college teacher, \$69,300; social worker, \$51,000.

doctors, dentists, lawyers and engineers—with the average income of the farm laborer—\$485—or that of the unskilled laborer—\$795. In spite of what so many doctors and dentists say, without any logic to back them up, about the overcrowded conditions of their professions, the professions need many more people in them.

"Insofar as our money economy expresses our desires, these services are more desired than those of other groups. Take the average annual salary of an engineer. It is five and a half times that of an unskilled laborer and three times that in the skilled trades."

WHEN Dr. Clark speaks of the present value of the lifetime earnings of a doctor or a dentist or a lawyer, he is not talking of his total life earnings. On the basis of the average annual earnings of a doctor, the total lifetime earnings amount to \$258,000. All total earnings are 42 times the annual average income, according to the method of figuring Dr. Clark employs.

But in computing the desirability of the various professions, Dr. Clark chose to emphasize the present value rather than take the total life earnings. He used a statistician's approach to the problem and handled a man just as if he were an investment in stocks or some other form of financial security.

Thus, eight years ago, when Dr. Clark and his associates decided that something definite ought to be found out about life earnings, they set to work to collect and compile the material, since no one had done anything about it before them on the same scale.

"Our method can be compared to that of a bank," Dr. Clark explained. "When a man enters a bank and wants to borrow \$5000 for five years and is willing to pay 6 per cent interest per annum, at the end of five years he must pay the bank \$6691. The present value of the \$6691 due in five years is therefore \$5000. Thus, if a man's salary five years from now will be \$6691, the present value at a 6 per cent discount rate is \$5000, and \$5000 is therefore what the bank now would pay theoretically for a salary of \$6691 to be earned in 1942. In the same way, \$108,000 is what a bank can safely pay now theoretically for the total earnings of a physician, \$258,000 to be earned by 1979."

