

## Re: What it takes to be a revolutionary thinker

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Date: Fri, 11 Mar 2005 09:46:19 -0600

On Fri, 11 Mar 2005, Gregory L. Hansen wrote:

> In article <f57171c7.0503101419.3cc7c713@posting.google.com>,  
> Zach <zj\_45@hotmail.com> wrote:  
> >"PD" <pdraper@yahoo.com> wrote in message  
> >news:<1110391716.864567.112540@z14g2000cwz.googlegroups.com>...  
>  
> >> *The other aspect of this, though, was my alarm at his perception of how  
> >> Einstein worked, how he did what he did. Few of the everyday Einstein  
> >> fans recall, for example, that the same year he was publishing his  
> >> seminal papers, he was struggling to get his PhD thesis approved, and  
> >> he was working at a side job because no one at the university could  
> >> find money to support him. In this 100th anniversary of some of his  
> >> singular accomplishments, I think it's worthwhile reminding people  
> >> about how much hard work, how much formal training, and how much time  
> >> spent simply learning, went into those accomplishments.*  
> >>  
> >> PD  
> >  
> >Interesting post. But why did you squash him like that?  
> >Here a teenage kid who is interested in something comes to see an  
> >expert in the field, on the sound advice of mom who wants to see her  
> >son go to university, and instead of encouraging his interest you  
> >explain "reality." He would have learned eventually, everyone does in  
> >their own way.  
> >Now, is he actually going to apply to a physics program? Go to  
> >university at all? Sure he was being idealistic and naive, he's only  
> >a kid. You had the chance to sell him on a physics degree, or at least  
> >encourage him to go to university, and to me it sounds like you blew  
> >it.  
>  
> I've lost patience with the unexamined assumption that we must work to  
> swell the ranks of the physics programs. Surely that's a good thing for  
> the professors who need a strong department, not to mention grad students  
> and post docs to do their work. But the employment picture for physicists  
> looks less like that painted by the American Physical Society and more  
> like that painted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. And the new federal  
> budget will do nothing to change that. Declining enrollment in physics

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- > *programs is market forces doing what they're supposed to do.*
- >
- > *If the kid doesn't make it into physics on his own, he'd be better off*
- > *somewhere else. But the converse is not necessarily true.*

I was waiting for you to bring your views on this. Of course, I actually do agree with what you're saying. People shouldn't be going into physics because they've been fed stories of high paying jobs, rainbow roads to tenure, and inevitable Nobel prizes.